

Issue N°.3

London ideas

A magazine about urban innovation

The many faces of the city centre *Jack Brown*, **A snapshot of central London** *Mario Washington-Ihieme*,
The West End: an economic ecosystem *Alexander Jan and Victor Frebault*, **London needs a civic heart**
Deborah Bull, **Reaching out to rough sleepers** *Sabrina Pathan*, **Managing tourism in a capital city** *Geerte Udo*,
A short walk through central London *Simon Calder*, **Ideas for central London** *Patricia Brown, Jennette Arnold*
and Adam McVey, **What next for retail in London?** *Eva Pascoe*, **Impact of the night tube** *Hilly Janes*, **A cultural**
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Jackie Sadek, **Taking over the streets** *Joanna Averley*

Ideas for a social city centre

London's future depends on its ability to innovate, reinvent and develop new ideas. This publication champions fresh, original thinking with the potential to transform London's city centre for the better. Through essays, interviews and data analysis, it explores the ingredients needed to keep central London thriving as a sociable city centre and asks: how can central London cope with the demands placed on it?

This edition of *London ideas* has been generously supported by Principal Sponsor Capital & Counties Properties PLC. We are also grateful to our Project Partners: Central London Forward; King's College London; Knowledge Quarter; and Publica.

This is part of a wider piece of work being undertaken by Centre for London's research team on the future of central London, details of which can be found at the back of this publication.



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Foreword

We live in uncertain times, Jack Brown concludes in his introduction to this issue of *London ideas*. But one thing is certain: London remains one of the world's greatest cities. It is the heart and soul of a nation: its rich diversity, creative energy and celebrated cultural landmarks set the gold standard for cities around the world.

Uncertainty often inspires imagination and innovation. Londoners – resilient, collaborative and optimistic across centuries – are rising to inevitable challenges posed by prevailing economic, political, technological and demographic turbulence, exploring tensions as a force for good. The emergence of “Tech City”, major infrastructure projects, stunning additions to the London skyline, new cultural districts, scientific institutions, and pioneering initiatives on clean air and transport all serve as good examples of this.

Nowhere is the “inspiration economy” more evident than in Capco's own great estate, in Covent Garden – where a decade-long, carefully curated transformation has confirmed the pre-eminence of one of the world's finest retail, food and entertainment destinations. It is a jewel not only in the Capco crown but that of London and Britain also. Covent Garden is a true destination for Londoners as well as for all visitors, from home and abroad. It's the civic and cultural heartbeat of the capital – rethinking traditional shopping experiences and the future of a citizen-friendly public realm. The “inspiration economy” of Covent Garden is a place of vibrant change, where imagination and innovation thrive.

If this is an era of disruption, it is also one of transformation. London's ability to transform - fuelled by imagination and innovation – has been expertly chronicled in the nine issues of *London Essays* and the two editions of *London ideas* that Capco has proudly sponsored to date. Again, this issue is brimming with new ideas – from fresh policies on lighting, taxation and transport to the establishment of business development areas and innovation districts. As ever, contributors have combined creative thinking with policy substance – true to the mission and values of Centre for London.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of *London ideas* – my thanks to Ben Rogers, Jo Corfield, Geraldine Bedell and the Centre for London team for its excellent delivery.

Ian Hawsworth

Chief Executive, Capital & Counties Properties PLC

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Introduction: The many faces of the city centre

Jack Brown

London is arguably a premier 'world city' and central London is its heart. A tourist destination. A hub for business. A home. All of which means that the city centre faces competing pressures and challenges.

London is arguably a premier 'world city'. It consistently finds itself at or around the top of the charts in city rankings, across a wide variety of criteria. It is both a national capital and a global city; it is English, British, but also of the world. The city's population is at its largest ever, and it continues to grow, in what is an increasingly urbanising world. But as well as its residents, London also draws businesses, investors, visitors, students and migrants from across the country and beyond. In this city, people live, work, trade, learn, grow, socialise, and love.

London's somewhat ill-defined centre is the melting pot into which all of these disparate elements are mixed. Central London plays an outsized and increasingly crucial role in both the city-wide and national economy. Unlike the central business districts of some international capital cities — Paris's La Défense springs immediately to mind — London's world-class central business districts, from the ancient cities of London and Westminster to relative newcomer Canary Wharf, are found within or in close proximity to its core. But central London is home to much more than just business.

Its greatness comes from its diversity of people, activity and function. Central London is home to rich and poor alike, but it also accommodates more headquarters of multinational corporations than any other European city, alongside millions of square feet of office and retail space. Central London is also home to iconic green and public spaces, world famous retail districts, national museums and cultural attractions, several top universities (and their students), the machinery of both national and city-wide government, and the monarchy.

Perhaps at least partly as result of its multi-purpose makeup, central London itself is difficult to authoritatively define. Ask Londoners to draw a line around 'central London' and you are likely to get just short of nine million odd and slightly varying shapes, varying in size from a small stretch of the West End to the entirety of the 12 London boroughs (plus the City of London) that make up 'inner London'.

Officially, there is the Central Activities Zone, or 'CAZ', which is used by the Mayor of London to define London's core for planning purposes. It stretches west to east from Hyde Park to the Tower of London, and from King's Cross in the north to Battersea Power Station in the south. But its shape is not tidy. It is defined primarily by the sheer volume of commercial activity that goes on within its boundaries, and in recent years has acquired a satellite to the east around the Canary Wharf development, formally named 'Northern Isle of Dogs'.

The CAZ area contains parts of ten different London boroughs; the boundaries of these boroughs themselves provide another possible definition of central London. Central London Forward, the strategic sub-regional partnership of local authorities that represents the city's centre, features 12 boroughs, adding Haringey

and Lewisham into the mix. Cities are living, breathing things, and defining their boundaries is always challenging. London's history is overwhelmingly one of relatively unplanned, chaotic growth, making defining its centre even more difficult; and its continued growth further complicates the issue. But what is clear is that central London matters.

It matters to a lot of people. The CAZ alone is home to nearly a quarter of a million residents. The ten 'central London' boroughs that feature a part of the CAZ are home to at least ten times that number. Population growth in central London, which had stalled in the initial postwar decades, has returned in recent years, and an extra half a million residents are expected to arrive in the next 20 years.

But as a living, breathing entity, central London is also constantly moving. Like a tremendous lung, it draws in over a million commuters each working day, exhaling them back to the rest of the city and its surrounding areas as night falls. And the number of jobs in central London is only expected to increase in the coming years. The capital's daytime population swells from nine to ten million daily throughout the working week, once tourists and other visitors are accounted for.

This is a vital, national organ. The value added and money spent by commuters and tourists alike does not remain in central London. Instead, it is pumped out around the nation, like red blood cells, in the form of taxation and investment. Central London is responsible for one third of London's jobs, and almost one tenth of the economic output of the entire UK. And public spending and investment across the country are overwhelmingly paid for by London and its surrounding areas — Greater London and the Wider South East 'megaregion' (London plus the South East and East of England) are the only parts of the entire nation that pay more into the national purse in tax than they receive in public spending.

The city's centre is crucial, then, for continued national prosperity. To many, it is home. Visitors and residents, businesspeople and artists, international and national tourists, lovers of green space and urbanists alike all come together in central London, and all to have a stake in its future. Their interests and desires often overlap, but also sometimes compete. Keeping the capital a vibrant, diverse place is no easy task — but it is crucial to its continued success.

An example of such a clash of interests can be seen in the recent dispute over the proposed pedestrianisation of Oxford Street, a Mayoral objective that sought to clean up the air and reduce accidents, in order to make the internationally-famous retail district more attractive to visitors. Here, the street's wider national and international role and the interests of nearby residents, concerned about the rerouting of traffic from the street (and particularly



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buses) clashed visibly, with the outcome currently remaining uncertain.

To make matters more complicated, central London's governance is complex, fragmented, and arguably outdated. Three layers of government – the boroughs, the Mayor, and central government – are just the beginning of the list of overlapping organisations responsible for the district.

Issues such as these are far from insurmountable, but are at least in part the result of one area having such national and local importance. Who is the city centre really for? And who should decide its fate, when the interests of different users collide? And is it possible to design our city centres in a way that better accommodates everyone's needs equally?

It does not help that central London is situated in one of the most centralised states in the OECD. London's institutions of governance have little control over the revenue generated in the areas that they are responsible for, and are limited in their ability to mitigate for the challenges that all this activity can bring. The tension between the district's national and local role can sometimes lead to conflict, but with the Mayor and the boroughs so disempowered by international standards, do those closest to the action really have the tools they need to ensure that these problems are solved?

City centres the world over are facing common challenges. Some are fairly universal, from the impact of automation on their economies to the existential threat of climate change. Across much of the world, a rising populist tide threatens the open, internationalist ideology that global cities have thrived on in recent years. Many cities find that their economies are pulling away from their nation states, leading to political and cultural consequences. How will central London not just survive but thrive in an uncertain and ever-changing future?

There are also London-specific issues. The entire city is in the midst of a housing crisis, causing financial hardship that leaves poorer Londoners worse off than their counterparts elsewhere in the country, and threatening the talent pool that makes central London such an appealing place for business. The delivery of Crossrail, a huge and potentially transformational transport infrastructure project and the first new Underground line in the city since the Jubilee Line, has been significantly delayed.

Wider challenges also loom. On a national level, the uncertainty and division resulting from the 2016 EU Referendum endures, as does the related threat of the economic shock of a hard Brexit. Years of austerity have hit the entire country hard; but London's local authorities have borne a disproportionate percentage of the nation's cuts. This is a particularly challenging time for the capital.

London has faced greater threats and survived. But it has also experienced periods of decline as well as growth

and prosperity, and its future is far from certain. Its city centre never stops evolving. We can't afford to stop, either.

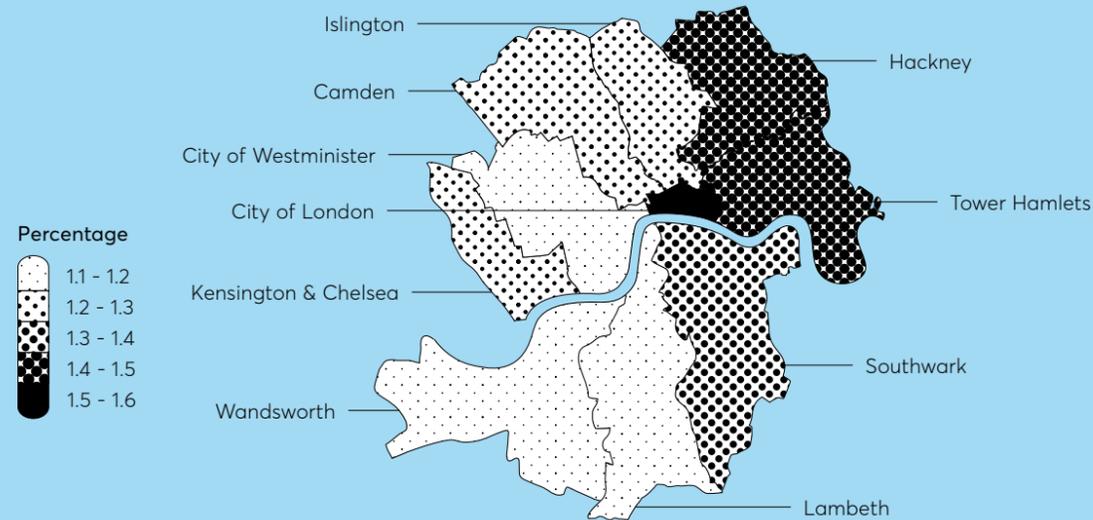
In such uncertain times, city centres like London's are going to need all the new ideas they can get. This is why Centre for London has launched a new research project on Central London, to gain a new understanding of the district and offer new thinking on how to ensure that its future is both fair and prosperous. It is also why this edition of *London ideas*, bringing together innovative new ideas on the 'social city centre', is so welcome. ■

A snapshot of central London

Mario Washington-Ihieme

Central London contributes hugely to national civic life and the UK's economy. We take a look at economic, population and visitor trends to see how the area has developed and been transformed in recent years.

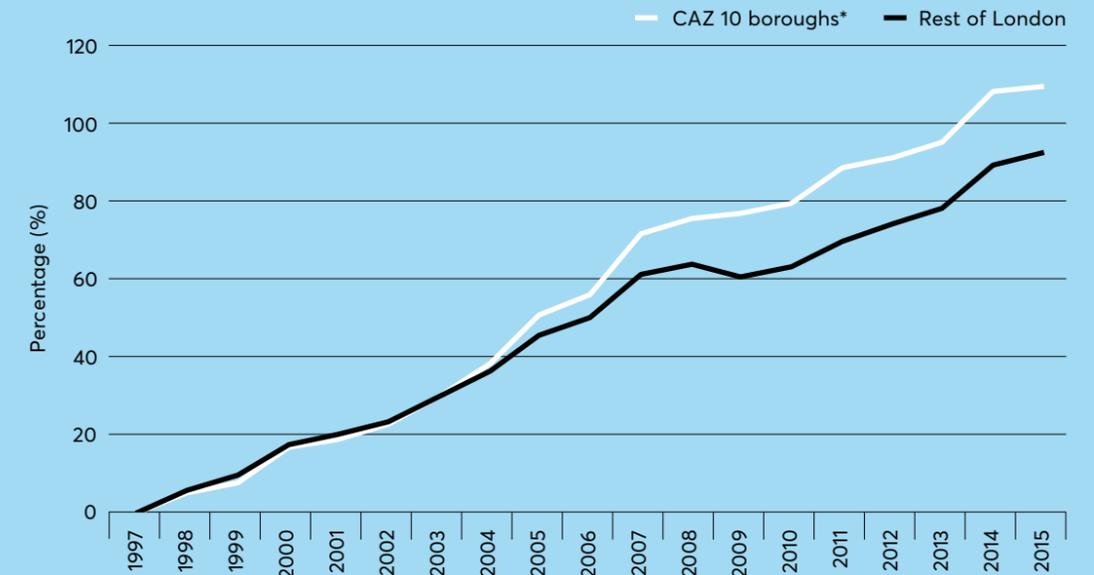
(1) Employment growth, 2009-2017



Source: Workplace employment by sector, 2009-17, ONS

Employment levels in all ten central London boroughs (those containing part of the Central Activities Zone) have increased since the crash. Whilst some boroughs experienced a slight dip in 2008-11, employment across central London recovered quickly, and is on the rise. Employment growth has been particularly strong to the east, with the City of London, Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Southwark seeing the most growth in recent years.

(3) Growth in GVA per head of population (current prices)



Source: Regional Gross Value Added (Income Approach) by Local Authority in the UK 1997-2015, ONS

*The 10 Central London boroughs that contain part of the Central Activities Zone, as defined by the London Plan.

Central London's economic output per head (as measured by Gross Value Added, GVA) is growing at a faster rate than the London average, a trend that emerged in the mid-2000s and has continued since.

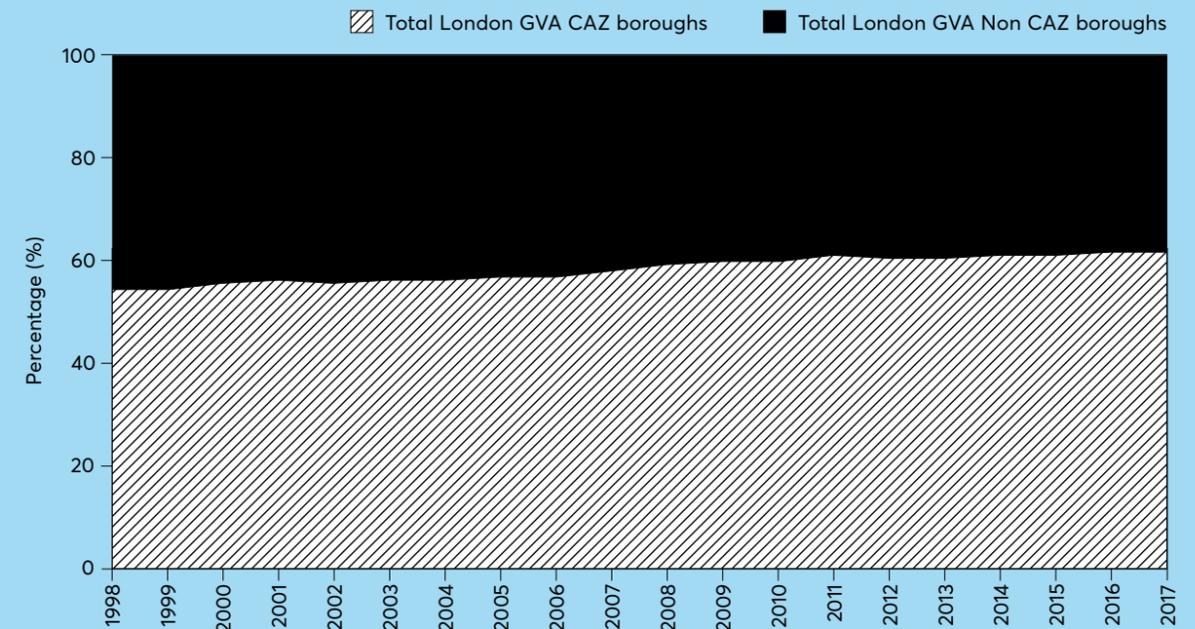
(2) Population growth by borough (CLF boroughs): 1939 -2015 and projections

Area name	Population growth 1939-1988	Population growth 1988-2015	Projected population growth 2015-2039
City of London	-31%	31%	43%
Camden	-41%	29%	16%
Hackney	-44%	42%	23%
Islington	-52%	34%	20%
Kensington & Chelsea	-41%	20%	13%
Lambeth	-36%	29%	21%
Southwark	-52%	41%	23%
Tower Hamlets	-62%	79%	35%
Wandsworth	-27%	24%	22%
Westminster	-50%	34%	16%

Source: Population estimates for London and boroughs, 1939 and projections for 2015, ONS

The postwar years saw a substantial decline in central London's population, driven by a mixture of deliberate government policy, changes in the economy and individual choice. This trend went into reverse by the late 1980s and population growth is projected to continue in the future.

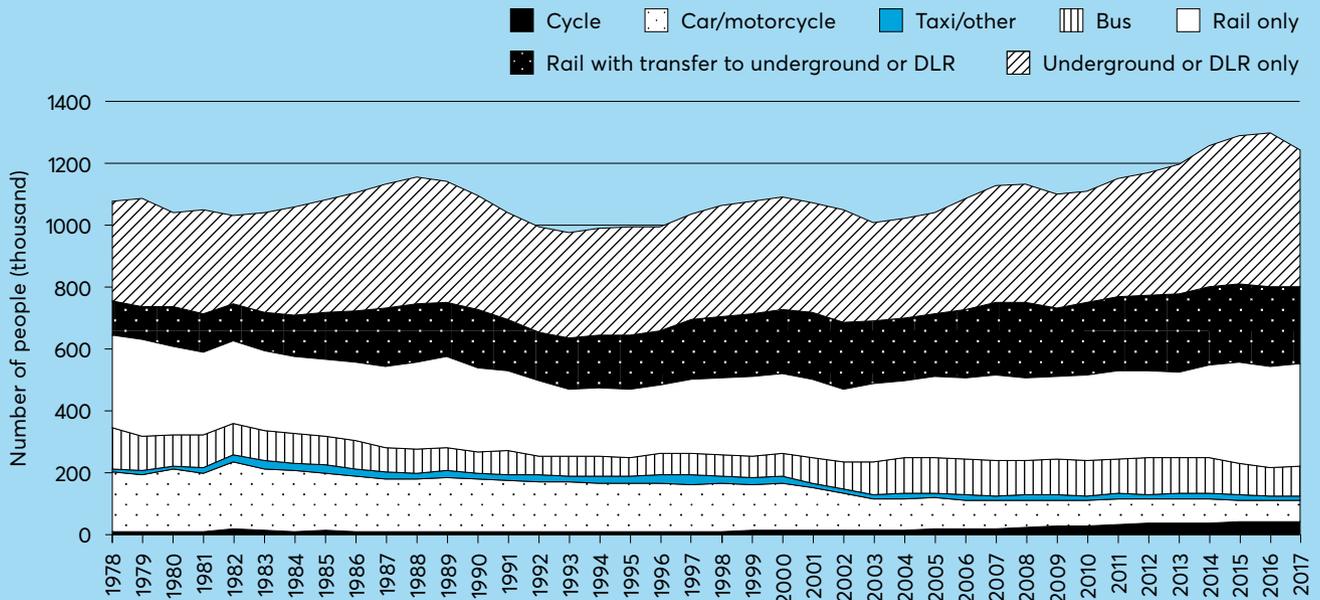
(4) GVA share 1998- 2017



Source: Regional gross value added (balanced) local authority by NUTS 1 region: UKI London, 1998-2017, ONS

The financial crisis of 2008-9, which was expected to hit economic output in central London particularly hard, appears to have had the opposite effect. The contribution of the 'central London 10' has continued to increase as a proportion of London's overall GVA, albeit a little more slowly, in the years following the crash.

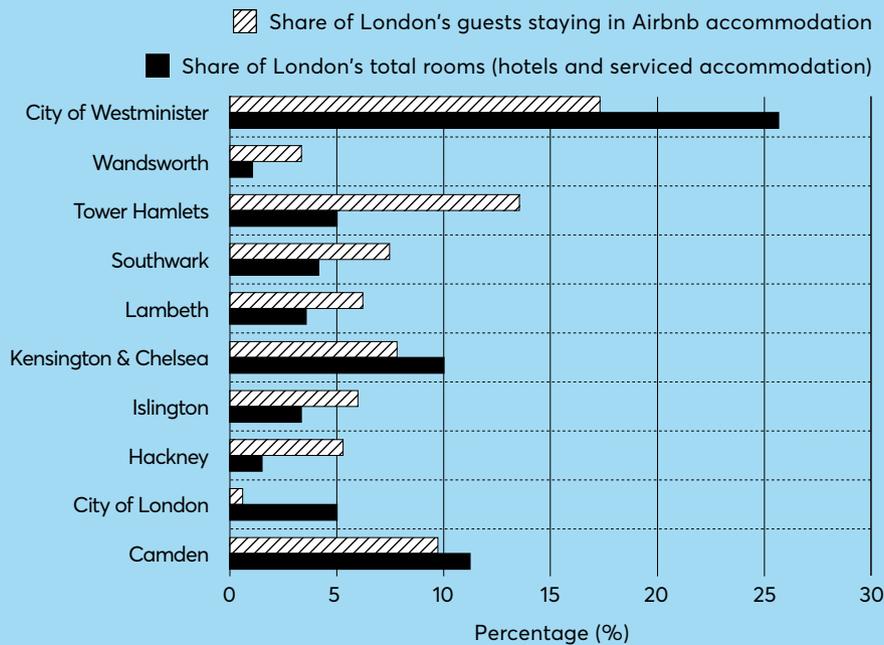
(5) People entering central London in the weekday morning peak, 1978-2017



Source: TFL Travel in London, report 11

The overall number of people travelling into central London in the weekday morning peak, whilst increasing, has ultimately varied surprisingly little over the last four decades. Transport modes, however, have varied a little. There has been a broad increase in underground, rail and cycle journeys over this time period, and a decline in car and motorcycle use.

(6) Share of London's hotel rooms and Airbnb guests, by central London borough



Source: London First: Tourist information, Mapping the local value of international visitors (2019)

Westminster, Camden, and Kensington and Chelsea are the most popular destinations for tourist accommodation, both in terms of hotel and serviced accommodation rooms and in Airbnb lettings. Tower Hamlets is home to a surprisingly large share of the Airbnb market.

The Good, the Bad and the City Centre

Oxford Street

600,000 people visit Oxford Street every day – and Crossrail is expected to increase visits by a third.¹ Central London has one of the most appealing shopping offers in the country. Whilst most UK regions saw a worrying reduction in retail jobs from 2011-2018, London actually saw growth of 16 per cent.²

City of Westminster

In 2016/17, 8,100 people were found to be sleeping rough in London: 32 per cent of these people were counted in the City of Westminster alone.³

Kensington & Chelsea

The only local authority in the UK where the average house price is over £1 million.⁴

Lambeth

As of 2017, Lambeth had 107 24-hour licensed premises – only Westminster had more.⁵

Hackney

Between 2012-17, Hackney gained 595 new cultural and leisure activity workplaces (from pubs and bars to restaurants and arts venues) – more than any other London borough.⁵

Tower Hamlets

At 39 per cent, Tower Hamlets has the highest poverty rate in London, after housing costs.⁶

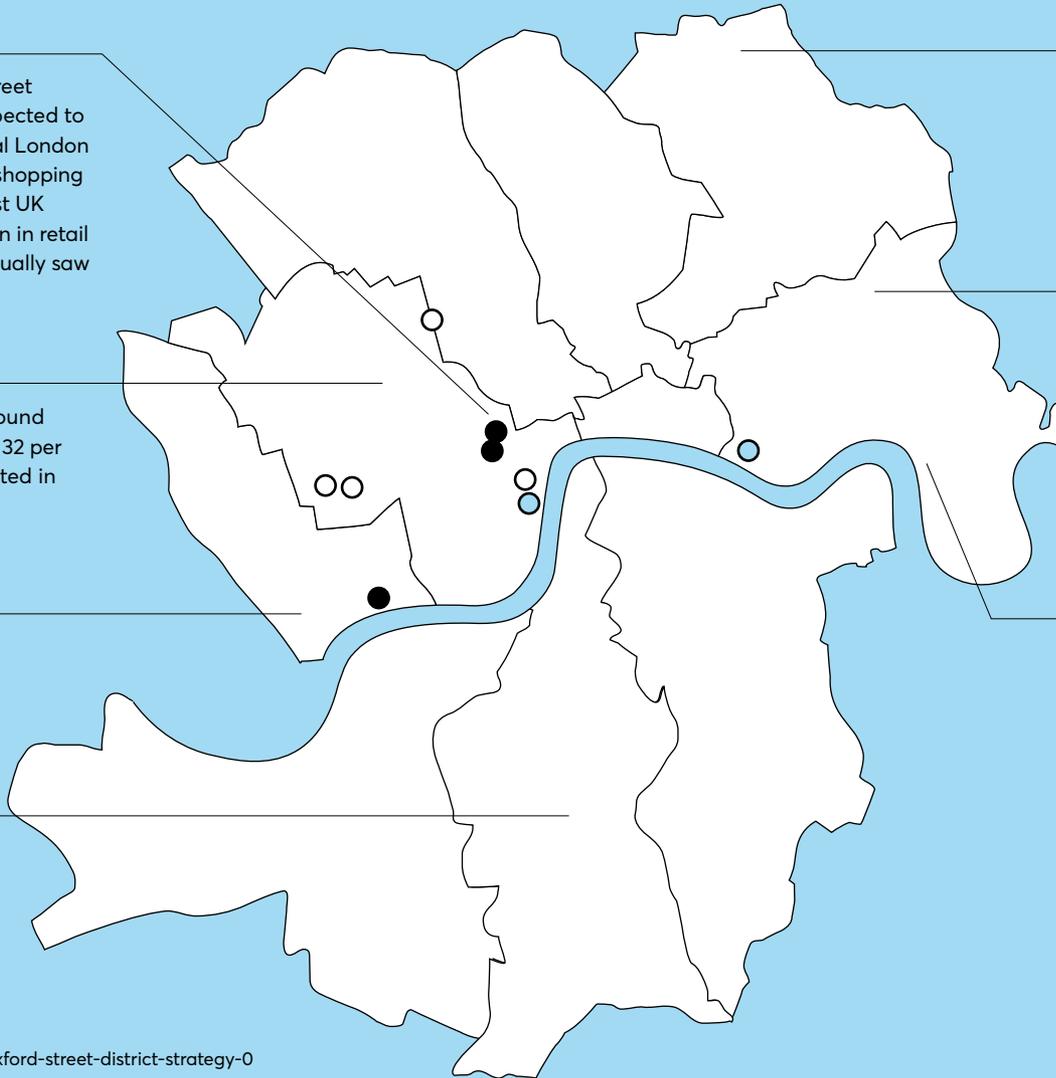
Canary Wharf

Southwark may have the current tallest building in London, (the Shard), but Tower Hamlets has more tall buildings in the pipeline than any other London borough (84, as of 2019) – 16 per cent of London's upcoming tall buildings are in the borough alone.⁷

● Three of the UK's five restaurants with three Michelin stars are in central London boroughs⁸

○ Central London is home to four Royal Parks.

○ Central London boroughs host two of the capital's four UNESCO world heritage sites.



Notes

1. <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/oxford-street-district-strategy-0>
2. <https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/pdfs/reports/retailtherapy.pdf>
3. <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/rough-sleeping-across-london>
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-house-price-index-england-may-2019/uk-house-price-index-england-may-2019>
5. <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london-at-night-full-final.pdf>
6. <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/poverty-borough>
7. New London Architecture, Tall Buildings Survey 2019
8. <https://guide.michelin.com/gb/en/restaurants/3-stars-michelin?lat=51.5254842&lon=-0.1057376>

The West End: an economic ecosystem

Alexander Jan and Victor Frebault

“London is moving east” has become a truism – particularly in the world of London’s planners, developers and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). Ever since the Reichmann brothers first eyed the Isle of Dogs for Big Bang City traders, way back in the 1980s, growth in population, employment, and floorspace in the more easterly parts of London has outpaced that in the west, including the West End. Infrastructure has followed this eastwards lurch – sometimes belatedly – with new road, rail and airport capacity helping to meet the burgeoning needs of growing housing and business districts.

All that may be about to change.

Troubled though its birth may be – and very long in delivery – Crossrail, a high-capacity, air-conditioned west-to-east rail link will offer a new artery to London’s West End. The project will pump a quarter of a billion people into central London every year. One-and-a-half million more people will be brought within 45 minutes of the City of Westminster and the Square Mile with Camden sandwiched between. In a recent Good Growth report for the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Westminster Council, Arup analysis showed that, between them, Tottenham Court Road and Bond Street stations – the sizes of which can only be described in multiples of football pitches – will be able to support at least

80,000 more commuters when the line opens. With the advent of Crossrail 2, they could accommodate as many as 120,000 in the morning rush. Two Crossrails plus a floorspace increase of 14 million square feet could result in the West End experiencing a golden age of growth. GVA would rise by a third, some £21 billion in 2041. Business rates could double. Home completions could reach nearly 3,500 by the same year.

Do these projections risk being no more than aspirations? The West End has understandably been historically warier of development than Canary Wharf and the City. Aside from the gleaming towers of Victoria, Paddington, and perhaps a handful of other West End locations, W1 and some of its immediate surroundings are probably not the place for very tall buildings or large-scale redevelopment. The district is endowed with listed buildings and conservation areas, as well as the squares and gardens that give it its unique and intimate character.

Until recently, the West End has been able to have its growth cake and eat it. Full-time-equivalent employment has rocketed, even as real estate space has fallen. Between 2000 and 2016, employment grew in Westminster by a quarter, matching the London rate (it was even higher in Camden). But at the same time there was a near two per cent reduction in office space. Retail areas fell by six per cent. In employment terms, this is a turnaround: between 1960 and 2011, Westminster employment grew by just 3.5 per cent while the rate for London as a whole was four times that.

Our report, along with others, concluded that employment growth has been achieved largely through intensified use of existing space coupled with falling vacancy rates. As Crossrail is about to unleash more employment potential into the system, is this trend sustainable? And if so, what does “good growth” look like?

Good growth in Central London

London has grown but, remarkably, thanks to anti-growth sentiment, the West End has not. Growth in the West End would bring the benefits of jobs, businesses, tax; and – although this might at first seem like a paradox – the best chance of preserving the West End that people value.

Good growth means making the most of new transport infrastructure to deliver employment for Londoners and using the proceeds to help maintain and look after this part of London, preserving its character and residential attractiveness. Without significant change, we think this may not happen.

Take employment: since 2011, employment density in the West End has increased at an annual compound rate of nearly 2.5 per cent. Space-per-central-London-worker has fallen from nearly 100 square feet to 79 square feet. Sooner or later, ratios are going to bottom out.

Then there are office vacancy rates. Those for the West End are already well below the London average. In 2018, they hit 3.7 per cent. Arguably, markets need a rate of closer to five per cent to function effectively.

An increase in transport accessibility without any corresponding increase in floor space means that asset values are likely to rise significantly, even before pressure from London’s long-term employment growth is taken into account. Such pressures would ultimately risk damaging the West End’s economic ecosystem.

Arup’s *Good Growth* report showed that without floorspace growth, the West End risks bifurcation: more very high-end activities with low employment densities (think hedge funds) coupled to mass market products geared to hordes of fly-by-night tourists. Many of the things that residents love – smaller shops, family-owned businesses, the village-like feel of its neighbourhoods – could be gone, replaced by corporates and chains. The West End’s attractiveness to Londoners and to people from all over Britain and beyond could wane.

Our analysis showed that in a downbeat “decline of sorts” scenario, in which growth was resisted and overly restricted, employment, business rates yield, GVA and floor space would all fall compared to today.

Can growth really be delivered without lots of undesirable change? Surely the West End needs towers to deliver? Again, our analysis suggests otherwise. Soho (not exactly renowned for skyscrapers) can claim the highest employment density of the West End with approximately 1,350 jobs per hectare. This compares to employment density across the whole (wider) West End of around 800 jobs, 38 percent lower than for Soho. For the purposes of illustration, if the West End increased floor space density up to Soho’s levels, another 320,000 more jobs could be accommodated, equivalent to an increase of 60 per cent compared to today’s employment levels.¹ Work on new buildings, and to increase the size of existing buildings, would not be noise-or disruption-free. But the reality is that the West End experiences that sort of disruption today: existing real estate is often refurbished multiple times. Growth may even lead to an easing off in refurbishment activity, as underlying supply increases.

Policies that aim to increase floor space in the West End could help to ensure that asset values rise gently over the long term, creating an environment of sustainable economic growth. For sure, there would be challenges. There is a desperate need to secure long-term funding for public services in the West End; to maintain, invest in and enhance the area and to deal with issues that at times plague inhabitants, such as litter, filth, noise and squalor. Unending sets of roadworks on the streets are highly disruptive and corrosive to residents’ quality of life. Even good growth will put pressure on existing busy streets and open areas. Green spaces, places to

rest and visit, and improvements to tame traffic will be more important than ever. Crime and anti-social behaviour will need to be contained. Governance and cooperation must be further improved. And, of course, all of this takes money – so one of our key recommendations is to secure lasting resources for the West End through further fiscal devolution.

Significant investment, enabled by growth, would ensure the West End remains an improving, thriving, liveable neighbourhood for its residents, which would also be attractive to business and tourists. The West End would continue to be a major employer for Londoners and South Easterners, many on modest incomes; it would be able to fulfil all its functions as a place of international, national, regional, central London, borough-level and neighbourhood significance.

All this will take increasingly flexible and imaginative planning policies that can maximise the positive impacts of Crossrail and other transport changes. Cross-boundary working by public bodies and London government will be essential. A relentless focus on quality-of-life issues and on managing some of the rougher edges of growth will also be required. The challenges are significant, but perhaps, "London is moving west" has a certain resonance, after all. ■

Notes

1. This is not meant to be a target for the West End (in fact our Good Growth figure for 2041 is about 40 per cent of this number). But it perhaps is helpful in illustrating what employment growth might look like with density levels that are achieved with narrow streets and not so tall buildings.

London needs a civic heart

Deborah Bull CBE

Central London anchor institutions can be thought of as immobile, permanent, hierarchal. But a new generation is re-thinking openness and flexibility through community engagement and adding local value.

In the United States, they call them ‘Eds and Meds’. Here, we tend to talk about ‘anchor institutions’: universities (often with linked hospitals) that are committed to their locality as major employers, service deliverers, and long-term owners of significant real estate. The term, though often used, has no precise definition yet is commonly understood. Just as anchors provide stability in ever-changing waters, anchor institutions offer a firm grounding beneath the choppy waves of political and economic instability. With a long-term perspective that goes beyond the election cycle and with the impartiality inherent in an academic approach, central London’s universities provide valuable support to policymakers in tackling the city’s so-called ‘wicked problems’.

And yet anchor characteristics – immobility and permanence – can also be seen as inflexible and hierarchical, especially in an age when useful knowledge is frequently co-produced with the many stakeholder communities that surround the university. Higher education’s anchor institutions are revisiting the idea of the civic university as a better way of articulating their role in ensuring that cities – and the communities that live in them – thrive.

Civic universities originally emerged to meet local skills shortages in 19th century Britain’s industrial cities. The 21st century has yet to agree on a shared definition for the new civic university, but Professor John Goddard, who has written extensively on the topic, suggests that it integrates teaching, research and engagement with the outside world such that each enhances the other. Research has socio-economic impact designed in from the start and teaching has strong community involvement. Most importantly, there is a soft, flexible boundary between the institution and society.

At King’s College London – not, in its origins, within the 19th century definition of ‘civic’ – we have set out our ambition to be a civic university at the heart of London, working in mutually beneficial partnerships to serve, support and sustain London while creating distinctive learning and research opportunities for students and staff. This commitment is embedded in education and research, manifest in the students we teach and the knowledge we create. Partnerships with the capital’s institutions and organisations – from the Black Cultural Archives to 10 Downing Street – support the city’s needs while helping students make the most of London as a living classroom. Researchers draw on the lived experience of Londoners to generate new knowledge to serve those people who are both its originators and beneficiaries. There is always mutual value: a powerful example is Project ReMAKE, which sees King’s students from the Dickson Poon School of Law mentor and support ex-offenders as they start their own businesses. Students learn about the challenges that prison leavers face while the entrepreneurs receive valuable advice and guidance.

Universities always contribute most effectively to a city’s wellbeing and success when they work in partnership. This means moving from the transactional relationships of the past (which were too often asymmetric) to becoming equal and active members of networks that bring together the many players with an interest in the locality and its communities. It also means proactively engaging by focusing not on what the institution can offer, but on local needs. At King’s, we consulted closely with the three central London boroughs in which we are based to identify those areas where we could, in partnership, achieve the greatest impact. For each of London’s universities, this will be a different conversation.

This shift from the transactional to the collaborative is mirrored in the corporate sector by the move from Corporate Social Responsibility to Shared Value. As defined by Michael Porter and Mark Kramer in 2011, Shared Value is ‘a set of policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the community in which it operates’.

A university-based example of this might be Parent Power, a partnership with Citizens UK and King’s College London that supports parents in south London with no experience of tertiary education in understanding the system and learning how to give their kids the best chance of getting in to university. The programme creates some economic value for the university (in that new students enrol) but it also creates value for local communities by improving progression rates into higher education and increasing social mobility. Individual programmes like this are a microcosm of the university as a whole, whose core purpose is to deliver a social good, not only through education and research but also through organisational practices and behaviours, procurement, sustainability policies, and integrated galleries, museums or public spaces.

In the light of this evolving relationship between the university and its locality, the anchor metaphor feels less and less appropriate. Universities are moving away from the safe harbour of inclusivity – ‘we’re open, come on in’ – in order to go out into communities to identify collectively how local needs can be met in ways that create genuinely symbiotic value. Nor does the anchor concept satisfactorily capture the value of the connections between London’s 40-plus higher education institutions. The image of a chain, tethered in one place yet linked to many more, might be more apt. Universities are a central but by no means singular element in an evolving ecology of information and ideas: interconnected, interdependent and stronger in partnership. They will contribute most effectively to London’s vitality if they work together to address its challenges and opportunities. ■



↑ Science Gallery London at King’s connects art, science and health to drive innovation in the heart of the city. It brings together local communities, young people, King’s researchers and artists to offer new perspectives on issues of global relevance. Open to all, with 15-25 year olds a primary audience, it invites visitors to consider our world in a new way.



↑ Award-winning Parent Power harnesses the power of parents to inspire young people from underrepresented groups to pursue higher education. Pioneered by King’s College London’s Widening Participation department and Citizens UK, Parent Power has trained 200+ parents from King’s local communities in university access, student finance and tutoring, to help empower families with no history of university participation.

Reaching out to rough sleepers

Sabrina Pathan

I'm out with a friend near Oxford Circus. We see a gentleman sitting near the station, sleeping bag to one side, a sign to the other. My friend slows down, weighing up what to do, then stops, crouches down and gives the gentleman all the change in her pocket.

We don't speak about it; we've talked about it before. I've worked in the sector long enough to know that this gentleman will almost certainly be somewhere in the sights of local outreach workers who'll be trying to keep him safe and get him inside. I spent ten years working in a central London day centre: I worry that by giving him money she's helping to sustain his homelessness and discouraging him from engaging with services. But who is anyone to make a judgement on the consequences of compassion and generosity? She feels helpless: something should be done, but by whom? And what? She does the only thing she can do at that moment.

Rough sleeping, the most visible expression of homelessness, sits in challenging juxtaposition to the wealth and privilege of the centre of London, the heart of government and business. The gulf between these two identities is difficult to bridge, justify, or accept. In 2017 homelessness in the capital hit a seven-year high, according to the national counts and estimates that are carried out each winter. London's Combined Homelessness and Information (CHAIN) multi-agency database paints an even grimmer picture, based on the people outreach teams see on the streets or at day centres through the year, who may not have been visible on the night of the count. By its nature, rough sleeping is moveable and difficult to pin down. It is hard to quantify the vagaries of human behaviour, pain and vulnerability.

In early 2018, central government convened the Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel to develop a response based on the knowledge and experience of people in the voluntary and statutory sectors who are working to end homelessness. The outcome was a significant tranche of funding, the Rough Sleeping Initiative, for

local authorities recording the largest numbers of rough sleepers across England according to the annual counts and estimates.

London continues to be the toughest nut to crack. CHAIN data in 2019 showed yet another rise in rough sleeping, despite injections of cash for a range of interventions. Homelessness can feel at times like an insurmountable problem. But is it? What would change the conversation and make a difference?

At the heart of the issue is an understanding of homelessness as solely the lack of a roof. The Attlee government of 1945 created a Ministry of Health with housing in its remit, appreciating that the two are inextricably linked. At the time, admittedly, the connections were more tangible: it was known that poor-quality housing affected people's health, in manifold, evident ways: black mould caused respiratory problems, overcrowding created the conditions for a range of health issues and so on.

It is becoming ever more apparent though, that physical stressors are only a part of the picture. It's not just that poor housing causes health problems; poor health, whether physical or mental, affects how people are able to access and hold on to their housing.

For me, there is a fundamental need to define housing as a basic human right, as critical as food and water. Until this is accepted by policymakers, we will struggle to make the importance of shelter a crucial part of anyone's recovery. Models of care such as Housing First have done much to demonstrate the centrality of a home not only as an end goal in itself, but also as part of a wider, longer approach towards a thriving life.

We need to understand 'home' not simply as physical shelter, but as something much less tangible and more emotive, connected to who we are as human beings. What does 'home' mean? To feel homesick is common and well-understood: we miss not only the bricks and mortar that surround us, but also our people, our community, our sense of belonging and safety.

Too often, I hear as a justification of someone's homelessness that they've rejected all available offers

or failed to engage with services, with no thought about the reasons why. It's too easy to say that rough sleeping is a 'choice' so that everyone else can abrogate themselves of any further effort. The reality is that viscerally damaging though it is, rough sleeping can feel like 'home' — and if the alternative doesn't provide that, it will be rejected. When an offer of accommodation is rejected, it is incumbent on us to improve or change the offer.

Why might someone reject an ostensibly acceptable offer of accommodation? The answer is becoming clearer to the sector, and we need policymakers to appreciate its implications. We now have an understanding of trauma as a common denominator for many people who are currently sleeping rough. Complex trauma (trauma experienced in childhood, mostly interpersonal and invasive in nature) can create pain and suffering that makes the feeling of 'home' nigh on impossible to sustain.

Until we can address the deep-seated pain of individuals and give them the time, space and love to be able to find their own feelings of home within themselves, we will struggle.

What do we need to do? First, we need a range of statutory services (not just housing) to acknowledge that homelessness has complex causes and requires personal solutions. This might mean treating street homelessness as an issue on which Adult Social Care and Mental Health Services need to take a lead.

We hear that we shouldn't give money to rough sleepers lest they spend it on drink and drugs. And — as my unease about my friend's generosity suggests — it can be difficult to encourage people to access services or help when other addictive needs eclipse the motivation to seek help. But these dependencies are a form of self-medication: when human beings feel overwhelming and relentless pain, the fastest way to get respite is to drink or use to make those feelings manageable. I believe that anyone would respond in the same way in such a situation. A Friday night tittle is no different, other than in scale or social acceptability.

For a person to be housed, they need to be able to identify what 'home' feels like. For home to be conceptually available to that person, they need to feel safe, and relentless pain makes this difficult. We need to create a social environment in which people are 'held', kept safe, and connected with the people in their world. The roof over their head is utterly useless when it leads to loneliness. Not every housing option is better than being on the streets, especially if it removes people from the other people and services that keep them connected with the wider world, isolating them from whatever support they have come to rely upon.

The ultimate objective is for people to feel a part of the world around them and connected and contributing to it. The roof, the bricks and the mortar of shelter are

just one part of that, albeit one critically important to physical health.

We behave as though 'independent living' is the desirable end goal, but to live in isolation from personal networks or statutory services is a huge ask, and I am not convinced that many people would want it for themselves. Financial independence doesn't take away the human need for companionship, in whatever quality or quantity it comes.

This is where policy matters. When statutory services work together in a person-centred way, people don't have to tick a set of boxes before they can access the next stage of help. In this context, there isn't a hierarchy of need and, very often, issues collide to present at the same time.

The Making Every Adult Matter Coalition (MEAM) has demonstrated the power of integrating systems more effectively. When mental health services are able to work with people to address pain and trauma, we give those people the chance to have some control over their lives. When adult social care is able to give attention to keeping people safe, 'held' and watched, we may be able to persuade them that the world cares about them and that they will be caught. When we have housing provision that allows people to 'fail' then come back and receive help again, we allow people to learn from their past experiences. In many ways, I think systems are too large and unwieldy to work to individual need, and smaller projects addressing smaller cohorts, with quite specific areas of need, would add more value.

Saying that the way to 'end homelessness' is simply to funnel everyone into an 'indoors' is reductive and lazy. We 'end homelessness' by finding homes. Homes are more than buildings, and until we can allocate value to the emotional connection of a person to a place, we will struggle. Conversely, when we see that human beings can be supported to find connection and safety in the relationships they have, we have a chance to change their lives. ■

A blessing or a curse? Managing mass tourism in a capital city

Geraldine Bedell interviews *Geerte Udo*, CEO, amsterdam&partners



Amsterdam faces a problem common to a growing number of cities, which are so attractive to tourists that they are threatened with being overwhelmed, even perhaps of losing their identities. What aspects of this most concern you?

In certain areas of the city centre at certain times of the week we have antisocial behaviour. Barcelona and Prague face the same challenge: people come to the city and the only thing they do is consume alcohol. They couldn't care less about locals or the place. With antisocial behaviour, there is a sort of consumerism: people pollute, drink, and leave. And that is where you have to say, "No. This is an area where people live and work".

Second, at certain times we have too many people using the same public space, which can create safety issues. In the red light district we face both of these problems at once. We have been an open and international city for almost 750 years and we want to stay open, but you have to look at the liveability of these areas.

Then there is the issue of affordability. Airbnb felt like a good thing at first because it enabled a lot of creative people in the city to rent out their apartments and travel. Now we have investors who purchase houses and push up prices so that it's almost impossible for locals to buy. I don't want to blame Airbnb – although I think

they should give something back – because the trend is broader. In London, too, you have investors buying in a way that makes the city unaffordable for young people. That can lead to areas where properties are largely unoccupied for much of the year. We need social cohesion, including in the city centre, and if there are empty buildings and owners who don't feel responsible, you're getting weak spots in your city.

What statutory recourse do you have, as opposed to simply nudging?

We have a high tourist tax in hotels, and a daily tourist tax: if you go on a canal boat, or a hop-on-hop-off bus, a percentage goes to City Hall. Our Netherlands and EU law means we can't discriminate between locals and visitors, so a local who goes on a canal boat has to pay the taxes as well. The biggest challenge there is that museums are getting more expensive for locals.

City Hall is bringing in a law that if you buy a house, someone has to live in it. We already have a rule that restricts the days you can rent out your home on Airbnb to 30 days a year. And we are working with the EU on policy that would give cities more control over private holiday rental.

What can you do about antisocial behaviour?

We have launched an Enjoy and Respect campaign, which makes clear that visitors are welcome in our city, but they must behave with respect for local community and the city. We are working on this with City Hall, the police department, the enforcement department, business, and locals. From the time you start thinking about Amsterdam, you start seeing messages; you see them in the airport, and in bars. If you're the target audience, (a male aged between 18 and 34, from the Netherlands or the UK), and you open up a Google route in certain areas, you see the same messages.

We also have to enforce the law. Penalties alone won't work. But not giving penalties won't work either. You have to make people aware that this is an area where people live and work.

Amsterdam Marketing recently changed its name to amsterdam&partners. Did that reflect a desire not to attract more visitors?

To a lot of people, marketing means more. Our focus is on making the city liveable. For that we need to guide locals, business people, and tourists around the city, including into a wider area where they may not previously have gone. We are trying to look at tourism in a more holistic way: cities are first of all places to live and to work. If you make that your priority, people will come. Our aim is to make Amsterdam a liveable, loveable, prosperous and sustainable city for everyone. We operate under the motto 'I amsterdam' to communicate our pride in the city, our sense of its reputation, and its importance to locals, business and visitors.

Is there a saturation point for tourism in Amsterdam?

I don't have a glass ball, so I don't know. But I think we do have to think about this – what if, in five or ten years, the amount of people who want to visit your city centre is really too great? We have to invest now. What can we do with new technology?

For example, could you have a mobile visa, so that if you didn't have a visa for a certain spot, you couldn't buy tickets for the museums? I'm not saying that's necessarily the answer but you hear people saying we have to halve the flights from Schiphol, and I don't believe that's the solution. I think flying less is very important from a sustainable perspective and very cheap airplane tickets do make city trips easier. But we should not forget that tourists will find other ways of traveling if flights go down in number. The solutions also have to do with human behaviour: you see it in

Venice, where there are sometimes streets that are oppressively busy but to the right and left it's quiet.

Has this tactic of promoting different areas of the city worked?

Yes. It usually starts with a creative hotspot, which is created and discovered by locals, then you get some new housing and you have to challenge other locals to go there and discover it. If locals start visiting then others will follow. You can't spread tourism to areas where locals don't go. For example, on the east side of the city we have more hotels now. People also stay there at night and try the restaurants and bars. The problem is that we have areas where 15 years ago no one would buy a house and now the housing is unaffordable – so yes, the placemaking worked, but the market's growing so fast that the pressure on the city centre isn't reducing.

To what extent can you plan ahead?

We are investing in data and artificial intelligence because we believe if you want to guide people to discover other areas and take pressure off some public spaces, you need to know better what their needs are. We know that a first-time visitor to Amsterdam will go to the Van Gogh Museum first, and then to the canal district. But we can guide them, suggesting a different route, or that they do it the other way round. If a visitor has been to Amsterdam many times before, they may want to go shopping in local neighborhoods. We have other stories for them; but first we have to find out how we can reach out to all these different people.

Do business visitors exacerbate the problems or are they a completely different issue?

We have one huge convention centre and a lot of smaller venues and we're doing very well in the market. The behaviour of business visitors is different – most behave well. Most stay in higher class hotels, most are inside during the day, and 40 per cent of convention visitors go to the museum, so we know they invest in our cultural infrastructure as well. Plus, the convention centre is on the south side, not in the city centre.

We've shifted the focus from quantity to quality. We have some huge conventions with 60,000 visitors. Partly because of the arrival [from London] of the European Medicines Agency, we're focusing on the life sciences industry. We want to attract companies that are active in life sciences or sustainability, with conventions we can connect to our startups and our challenges, and which have a broader effect than moneymaking.

What can London learn from your experience?

Both cities are fortunate in that we are not wholly dependent economically on tourism. Unlike some cities, there are a lot of other economic pillars. It's important not to see tourism as an isolated economy. In the past, our focus on the problems of tourism meant we didn't always get the right solutions: locals here dislike the monoculture of tourist shops, for example, but their spread also has to do with people no longer using their local shops, the baker and the butcher. They're going to the cheap supermarket instead, of getting deliveries. You have to look at the whole picture.

The big shift in the last five years has been that we used to say that Amsterdam is a city of locals, businesses and visitors; now we say that locals definitely come first. The visitors and business conventions are welcome if they add value to the Amsterdam area and respect the locals. ■



↑ Amsterdam-Noord is populated by artists and young people making it one of the most creative neighbourhoods, with iconic architecture such as the EYE Film Institute and the A'DAM Tower which houses bars, restaurants and an observation deck.

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A short walk through central London

Simon Calder

To see, feel and taste how London is changing as it seeks to remain one of Europe's premier tourism cities, take a ten-minute stroll with me.

We'll begin exactly one mile from the Houses of Parliament, and a little further than that from London Bridge and Fleet Street, at St George's Circus in Southwark, created as the capital's first modern traffic intersection in 1771. The obelisk in the centre was "Erected in XI year of the reign of King George MDCCLXXI". Today tourists wheeling cases or taking selfies are part of the streetscape: in the past two decades numerous big hotels have opened in London SE1 – even though, not far from here, on the south side of Blackfriars Bridge, the Albion Mills provided William Blake with the notion of "dark, satanic mills". Green and pleasant life was not abundant on the South Bank when Blake was writing two centuries ago. Today, watch out for the cyclists as they swoop through their dedicated traffic lights – part of the rehumanisation of a city that, like much of the rest of the country, became overly enamoured with the motor car in the second half of the 20th century.

The traffic has been discouraged, and what remains is calmed by civil engineering that puts people first.

Humanising the streets tempts tourists to step away from the celebrated sights and helps them reach areas that are simultaneously quirky and representative of the dazzling, welcoming world city that London has become.

Just south of here, the Elephant & Castle has transformed from the capital's most uncompromising major road junction into a public plaza. Further down the A23, Brixton welcomes visitors to a neighbourhood that celebrates inclusively, ingenuity and indulgence – and which has become a shop window for great designers.

All the same, I would guess that 99 per cent of tourists in London – whether international or domestic – still know little of SW2 and its cutting-edge vibe. Persuading tourists to seek out and find quirkier neighbourhoods has long been an issue for London and other big cities. While Camden Market and Shoreditch have made it into the mindset and social media of visitors, Brixton, Peckham and Hackney have not. For the sake of the glories of the centre, as well as for the rest of the city, there should be more emphasis on visiting the surprising, unexpected places.

Spreading tourism across a wider area is essential. Partly, that's because of the benefits it brings to less prosperous areas, partly because it reduces the

overwhelming concentration on the core of the city. Like Amsterdam, Barcelona and Venice, cities that have done well economically from tourism but now threaten to be overwhelmed by it, London's centre will have to consider the suffocating consequences of the unregulated functioning of the market, and the potential of visitors to erode the wonders they have come to see.

Local lawmakers can help the market take less damaging directions. One solution might be to impose high local taxes on hotel stays in oversubscribed areas. Less wealthy tourists will move outwards, and the market will respond by opening hotels in attractive but less well-known localities.

Wandering northwest along Waterloo Road it's possible to see how visitor accommodation can sit well in a residential and business neighbourhood. The area is thriving, with a blend of housing, social and otherwise, and small businesses. Waterloo Road begins with a 12-storey hotel (complete with eighth-floor SkyBar), the H10. On a brief journey northwest, a dozen cuisines attract the hungry visitor. The local acclaim of Masters Superfish is clear from the number of black cabs parked outside each evening. "Hello Darling," calls the ridiculously orange neon sign above SE1's newest celebrity-run restaurant, where former Masterchef winner, Natalie Coleman, serves up "botanical cocktails" and seasonal sharing dishes such as blow-torched mackerel served with buttermilk, dill and cucumber.

An essential ingredient for tempting visitors to London rather than to Paris, Berlin or Barcelona, is the breadth and depth of cuisine and culture. The Old Vic, which presides over the principal intersection, is the beacon for the centuries-old entertainment industry on the South Bank, its supremacy challenged by the Young Vic along The Cut. Diagonally across the main traffic junction, Cubana brings a splash of Havana to SE1. Marie's Café, established half a century ago and tucked behind the stalls of one of the capital street markets, is one of London's quietly brilliant Thai restaurants. And for an unvarnished, unshaven hipster experience, wander across to Bar Elba where, once you pass the style (and safety) police on the door, you must climb

the five storeys up a stairwell unimproved since this was a 1980s office for a telecoms firm.

Survey the skyline. Even if you were here last year, last month or last week, London's silhouette changes as rapidly as the population. Focus on the icons of our generation: the London Eye, which span into prominence in the opening months of the 21st century; and the Shard – whose construction began only a decade ago. The geography of London is evolving, creating new points of interest and attraction for visitors. An excellent example of how an icon can prove gravitational is Tate Modern, the unimaginably successful reinvention of a power station as a gallery for the masses.

London's centre of touristic gravity has moved south and east, as the crowds along the riverside walk testify. This is the kind of reinvention and dynamism that the city will have to continue to demonstrate as it promotes a tourism that is about the city as it is now, and not solely as it once was.

Waterloo Road is also home to the busiest transport hub in the EU – and, while the station lost its international status in 2008 when Eurostar relocated to the magnificent St Pancras, trains full of domestic tourists pull in, along with the half-million or so daily commuters from Surbiton, Woking, Guildford and beyond. With Brexit looming and the slump in sterling, London is one world city where the pound is still worth a pound. It may be that visitors from the rest of the UK will take up some of the slack left by European tourists if they decide to mirror the Brexit referendum result and turn their backs.

Waterloo is part of the centre of the city, but it is not home to the most predictable tourist sites, the ones on the postcards in the tourist shops. I hope that our short walk illustrates how tourism can enhance and work with an area that is also vibrantly alive with its own independent activities – foodie, cultural, business, transportation and residential. Waterloo shows the way that tourism can ripple outwards for everyone's benefit, so that, today, more than ever, Ray Davies' assessment of more than half a century ago is true: "As long as I gaze on Waterloo Sunset, I am in paradise." ■



Three ideas for central London

Patricia Brown, Jennette Arnold OBE, AM and Adam McVey



A lighting strategy for London

Patricia Brown

It's a long time since our safety and survival hinged on being close to the warmth and light of the camp fire but ever since man first discovered fire we have been seeking to extend our days through the creation of light. In the modern age, light — both natural and artificial — is central to a functioning society and economy, and important to a sense of safety and wellbeing, as well as to beauty in our buildings and spaces. Yet despite its ubiquity and the fact that it provides a fundamental underpinning to our daily lives, light — lighting — is not easy to understand.

It was for that reason that one evening in late January, a group of people with a range of interests in shaping good places gathered some 30 kilometres outside Lyon in Signify's Outdoor Lighting Application Centre (OLAC) for an illuminating (literally) 90 minutes, which showcased the possibilities and power of lighting in the built environment.

Here, we witnessed a town square painted with light; its civic buildings and streetscape reimaged through different lighting effects.

Worried about light pollution? On a suburban street, a demonstration of 'dynamic' light showed how streets can be dimly but sufficiently lit during the wee small hours, with the light rising in intensity to brighten the path of a nocturnal pedestrian. We saw how different light levels and sources influence our sense of safety and our impression of colour, which can be critical, say, in accurate witness statements.

An initial, impressed hush descended after the demonstration, broken by a succession of urgent, interested questions: 'Where does lighting fit in the planning process?' 'Who's responsible?' 'At what point?'

And there was a principal question on everyone's lips, reverberating in subsequent conversations: just how can London push lighting up the agenda in a coordinated way?

Without doubt, London is finally waking up to the importance of lighting and the need to plan for it at a city level. In unveiling the first four beautifully lit bridges of the Illuminated River project — the world's largest outdoor public art installation — London is showing its inhabitants and visitors the wonder of light. Beyond offering the city a reimagined riverscape, the project's focus on sustainability and ecology benefits the river's natural habitat, providing far greater protection from light pollution than did previous lighting schemes. Separately, one of the major supporters of the project, City of London Corporation, has already created its own lighting strategy to guide its approach to lighting the City's streets and historic fabric.

It's wonderful to see lighting starting to get the attention it deserves in our civic realm. So let's build on this and take it up some notches with the creation of a strategic approach to lighting our city. In order to do that we must look beyond lighting merely as a way of accentuating our buildings and illuminating our streets. The essential first step is taking time to understand where and how light can play a part in the wider needs of the city and its citizens, since the deployment of light has numerous useful applications.

We should start, of course, with the basics: providing essential illumination, reducing light pollution and energy use, and making our city more beautiful and interesting to be in. Then we should focus on other urban needs, problems, and opportunities that a strategic lighting approach can help address. Lighting can help revive retail streets; guide crowds to and from venues; de-escalate anti-social behaviour; gently bathe late-night strollers with sufficient light to get them safely home; offer guided bike paths; even transmit WiFi. We must also think of — and plan for — the reduction or absence of light, since lighting thrives on contrast and many well-lit buildings are let down by adjacent heavy handedness.

Only after we have determined the possibilities, opportunities and our objectives should we develop a plan involving the right combination of stakeholders and specialists. The people gathered at OLAC were a pretty good starting point: developers and city planners, urban designers and landowners, heritage experts and architects, Business Improvement District (BID) directors, elected leaders, and a few lighting specialists. One way or another everyone in the room had some stake in putting good quality urban lighting at the centre of our civic realm. Everyone was enthused about playing a part.

Since then, The Illuminated River project has tangibly demonstrated what can be done with leadership and vision. Now let's build on that. ■



Can we say goodbye to the car?

Jennette Arnold, OBE, AM

If you have ever been outdoors in London early in the morning, you will know that in what seems to be a golden hour around 5am, the city becomes a different space: it feels fresh and clean, with lots of potential. Twelve hours later, it's very different – and the main cause of that is the noise, irritation and air pollution caused by motor cars. Motor vehicles are the primary cause of a kind of modern day Great Smog that poses a huge to public health.

Could we imagine that early morning golden hour continuing throughout the day? Could London follow Barcelona in pedestrianising streets within sets of nine city blocks? Or Ghent, where 35 hectares of the centre are almost car free (public transport taxis and permit-holders may enter but must not exceed 20 miles per hour)? Or Pontevedra in Galicia, where 300,000 square metres of medieval centre have been pedestrianised? Or Paris, where Mayor Anne Hidalgo has brought in car free days to the centre one Sunday a month?

This kind of thing is easier, of course, in places where there are fewer political interests to take into account and especially where there are new 21st century cities to create. Mandar City in Abu Dhabi is a government backed eco-city, designed to be car free in a region where air-conditioned cars have long been seen as essential to the smooth running of a modern way of life. China has launched a number of similar initiatives, including the Great City on the outskirts of Chengdu.

London has made serious attempts to limit the amount of traffic and pollution:

- Charging systems – the Congestion Charge, Low Emission Zone, Toxicity Charge and now Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ).

- Cleaner buses – the gradual introduction of electric, hybrid and hydrogen powered buses.
- Scrappage schemes to help smaller businesses and low-income Londoners replace high polluting vehicles.

I would go further and reduce the traffic itself. What would this look like? Let me suggest a few ideas:

- A city-wide plan of Traffic Free and Limited Traffic Zones – designated areas where traffic is limited or excluded, developed by adopting a planned approach that avoids simply shifting pollution from one area to another. There are already some moves towards this in the Square Mile; and in my own constituency, a 'Mini-Holland' scheme is encouraging more cycling and walking by removing vehicles from a designated section of a neighbourhood. To take maximum effect, though, these initiatives should be spread over a wide area.
- Car free areas require an improved public transport service – an integrated public transport offer that delivers affordable, reliable and accessible services at a frequency that enables Londoners to live a life less dependent on cars; and safer, more reliable networks for cyclists.
- Increased car sharing and car clubs.
- Reduced reliance on delivery vehicles – with more responsible use of internet shopping we would encourage deliveries to the shop rather than our homes. In addition, we could start exploiting the benefits of alternative home automated delivery systems (drones) currently being trialled throughout the country.

I would be the first to acknowledge that the transition will not be easy; but we have much to gain:

- Sustainable reductions in air pollution, going beyond the adoption of alternative fuels.
- A safer and more pleasant environment – with fewer road casualties and with reduced traffic noise.
- Improved physical and mental health, since studies continue to show the detrimental impact of traffic on our health, quite apart from the impact of air pollution.

- Improved tolerance of others – locked inside our cars we are somehow one step removed from those around us, excused from the normal social exchanges; everyone else is in our way, an obstacle to be avoided or shouted at. Reducing dependency on cars will help humanise us all.
- Broader environmental and social benefits – a safer and more pleasant environment for us will enable the wider introduction of shared green spaces, where local residents can create wildlife friendly environments, passing on the dividend to the natural world. In the process we can also reduce social isolation and enhance community engagement.

A number of cities already have extensive traffic free zones and/or limited traffic access. Very often this has been about traffic being incompatible with the preservation of ancient buildings and monuments, and rightly so. But traffic should also be compatible with our health and wellbeing, and that means less of it, especially in the centre. ■



Tourist tax: what London could learn from Edinburgh

Adam McVey

Edinburgh, like London, welcomes millions of visitors each year. They bring investment, diversity and vibrancy to our cities – but they also strain their core services.

The city's economy needs tourism, which provides 35,000 jobs and generates £1.5 billion from its four million-plus visitors annually. The numbers are rising: between 2010 and 2015, the number of visitors rose by 18 per cent, and the amount they spent went up by 30 per cent.

To maintain its position as a global destination, Edinburgh needs to continue to invest in the areas that make it a success story. This is why Edinburgh has reached the conclusion that a transient visitor levy (TVL), a "tourist tax", is in the best interests of our residents, our tourism industry, and visitors. Revenue raised from a TVL could support key services for residents and visitors, and create benefits for the tourist industry. These benefits include improving the public realm; investing in parks, public spaces, clean streets; and better marketing of the city.

The idea for a tourist tax come from the people. Each year, City of Edinburgh Council seeks feedback on its specific budget proposals and gives opportunities for citizens to submit ideas for how they think the running of the city can be improved. In 2017 a tourist tax did not feature in any of the engagement material yet 42 per cent of all ideas submitted to the budget consultation referred to some form of a tourist tax, more than any other single suggestion received that year or in any other.

Clearly, there is a widespread feeling among residents that tourism needs to offer something to the public realm and not simply add to the council's budget pressures. Similar taxes elsewhere in the world, in Florence, for example, raise significant amounts of money, which are reinvested in public services for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

And Edinburgh's own modelling suggests that the introduction of a levy on accommodation could raise substantial revenue: a small charge of £2 per room per night could generate around £14 million a year. Our research shows that such a levy is unlikely to adversely affect Edinburgh's accommodation industry; handled correctly, it should help to secure the ongoing sustainability and health of tourism in the city.

The cost of accommodation is not the only or even the main factor in determining visitor demand. Tourists also consider the overall appeal of a destination, its affordability, the overall quality of the tourist experience, cultural events and other attractions. With its packed events and festivals calendar, historic city centre, free museums and art galleries and wealth of outdoor attractions, Edinburgh – like London – is well placed in this regard.

It's not particularly easy to draw conclusions from other countries that have implemented at TVL. Admittedly, the UK already has one of the highest rates of VAT in Europe, but other fees and levies on the accommodation sector, such as higher rates or corporation taxes, mean that comparisons with other cities are difficult to make. Rates of corporate income tax and personal income tax have an impact on the supply of labour, while real estate taxes and business rates also affect the total tax burden on the hotel sector.

Perceptions of tax among businesses depend to a large extent on whether the money raised is being used by the public sector to sustain and support tourism. Businesses are much less likely to be hostile if they can see that the revenue is improving the overall product. In Edinburgh, hotels make up more than half of the total accommodation market, but there is also emerging growth in private letting, with companies like Airbnb at the forefront. An Edinburgh TVL must be fair to all, easy to understand, administratively efficient, and introduced in collaboration with the industry, with a shared governance and transparent use of funds.

We have looked at other local income-raising options too, including a Tourism Business Improvement District (a collection of businesses paying into a common pot to meet strategic aims), and a Cultural Heritage Fund. There are strengths and weaknesses to each option and the alternatives are still under consideration – but the other schemes don't enjoy the same level of support as the TVL, mainly because they would give local people less influence on how the additional investment could be spent. These other models also may lack stability and certainty of revenue, which could lead to future financial pressures and undermine the city's ability to make strategic investments.

Our consultation showed substantial support for a TVL among residents, and across a business community that appreciates the benefits the investment could bring. The Scottish Government has now committed to introducing legislation to give us the powers we need to move ahead with the policy.

The case for a tourist tax is strong. Every survey in Edinburgh so far has shown overwhelming support for the policy. As the enabling legislation is brought to the Scottish parliament, we will continue to build a compelling case for the powers to introduce a transient visitor levy for the long-term benefit of our world-class capital city. We believe it is a model that other cities will follow, and that our experience may have useful lessons for London. ■

Every little helps: what next for retail in London?

Eva Pascoe

The Era of Shopocene is fast coming to an end as high street shops are becoming a relic of the past. But high streets are not just places to shop, they're valuable social, cultural and commercial spaces too. The Mayor must do more to protect them.

In a sci-fi novel written in the 1950s, the hero survives a nuclear disaster to discover a relic in an abandoned cave: a handwritten note in a coded language on a crumbling memo pad: a 20th-century shopping list.¹ The novel is set in the 26th century, but it might as well be 2019: the shopping list is fast becoming a relic of another era, along with high street shops it was needed for.

Modern consumer “needs” — whether for food, household items, or contact lenses — can all now be bought online. Physical stores increasingly cater for the “wants” category. And non-vital shopping — for a new dress, say — is also often done online, perhaps on an impulse triggered by an image of an influencer on Instagram. With mobile phone usage now reaching 95 per cent of those in 18-38 age bracket in the UK, soon all shoppers’ “wants” will also be capable of being satisfied via that shop-in-your-pocket, the smartphone.

What does this mean for London?

In London, the Era of Shopocene is fast coming to an end. The value of touching a dress in store and trying it on is massively outweighed by the minimal effort of buying a couple of dresses online with a few clicks, trying them at home and sending one back. Petrol is saved, there’s no parking hassle, and you have more time to walk the dog.

But Londoners miss their high streets, as we discovered during research on the Grimsey Reviews²; they feel depressed at seeing boarded-up shops on the way to work. High streets have social, environmental and business value beyond shopping: they provide a focal point for communities, particularly for older people, the parents of young children, and local workers. In April 2019, 400 per cent business rate increases hit many of London’s streets even as online shopping grew by 13 per cent. Other cost increases (like the Apprentice Levy) followed, forcing retail to give up the fight, just as we forecast it would in the Grimsey Reviews; 2018 had already seen the highest numbers of shop closure rates in retail history. A recent Centre for Cities report suggests that closures have more troubling effects for weaker high streets, which have fewer cultural amenities like cinemas, bars and gyms to sustain them after hours.³

As the new owners of House of Fraser noted, the business is not viable “even at zero rent”⁴; Topshop is in a similar situation.⁵ Shopping centres and retail parks have also seen a steep decline in footfall and spending.⁶ It is pretty clear that London needs a high street emergency plan.

From shopping malls to social hubs

Shifting London’s high streets from traditional shopping hubs to social centres should be at the core of the new strategy, with tax support for “experience venues” like the

axe-throwing bars, escape rooms, and video-games cafes that are now finding new audiences. No longer should we be thinking Work-Eat-Shop but, rather, Work-Eat-Play.

Londoners love events, and apps like Facebook Events, Eventbrite and MeetUp have made them much easier to promote. Zero-cost digital event invitations have made pop-up launches for new products easy to run at low cost in a way that would previously only have been affordable for big premium fashion brands.

There is a growing role for brands promoting more environmentally conscious ways of living. Two decades of cheap imports mean that most of us have more stuff at home than we have storage space — and many of us are rethinking our relationship with fast fashion,⁷ with younger shoppers especially wanting to support local London brands that are doing something good for the planet (or at least not making it worse). This season, ASOS, typically associated with fast fashion, has only been adding ethical brands, responding to customers’ shifting values. Landlords need to theme retail around eco-conscious shopping, ethical beauty, and vegetarian and vegan food. Londoners’ average age is 35⁸ — only the cities of Cambridge and Oxford are younger in the UK — and millennials’ values and spending power are setting the trends in the capital.

Strength in numbers for pop-ups

New multi-brand pop-ups are beginning to appear, allowing brands to cluster and save money on rental. In Greenhaus in Shoreditch, brands share space divided into narrow display units where visitors can learn about the latest ‘green’ cocktail straw, Stroodles, try Wow You!’s vegan cosmetics, or drink coffee at the ethical coffee bar. Mixed-retail formats offer low-cost entry, with a starting package not for the whole pop-up (too pricey, thanks to near-monopoly of Appear Here) but instead a shelf or a display box, offering a chance to hundreds of new Instagram-led brands keen to show their wares in a physical space.

Mirror mirror on the wall

One online-resistant category is cosmetics. Beauty is increasingly a cross between fashion and medical diagnostics. Clinique, for example, offers a new technology that allows customers to scan their face for a diagnosis of skin tone or damage. Staff then mix bespoke, fresh product on site and you get a moisturiser that is fresh, prepared for you, and delivered in inspiring surroundings. L’Oreal and Charlotte Tilbury offer “magic mirrors”, that let the shopper try on makeup virtually, using computer vision rather than fingers, with the option to test your choice physically with a beauty guru in the store.



↑ ‘Made in H&F’ is a pop-up initiative between Kings Mall Shopping Centre, Hammersmith & Fulham Council and Hammersmith BID to bring back into use an empty shop unit and showcase local artists and makers.

Data in the city

Boris Johnson established the London Data Portal when he was Mayor to make public data available in one place. It was a good start, but quality data about shop openings and closures are still only available from a few private sources, the best of them Local Data Company and CDRC (Consumer Data Research Centre). These organisations also supply footfall data based on Lidar sensors. Granular data, including real-time footfall, offers guidance to incoming retailers, making decisions less risky and encouraging new entrants.

A new source of retail data for London is InLinkUK, street furniture offering free public WiFi, device charging, and a screen displaying maps and ads while additionally gathering data about micro-local usage of public space. Once the base-level footfall in is established for a micro-location, the decision to take on a store and on what terms becomes more rational. This kind of data could also provide a means to evaluate business rates. Stores that generate high footfall could be incentivized with tax breaks in recognition of their contribution to the appeal of the area.

Work, eat, play

The success of co-working spaces in London indicates that the talk about working from home was largely a myth. Humans want to socialise at work, to gather around the watercooler and gossip about Bake Off. We need to support the transition to using more of London's space for work. As London's high streets shrink, we will have excess retail space, much of it in prime locations that could be used for work.

One use of those excess retail locations might be to convert the storefronts into advertising space for online retailers (either providing a mannequin space, or via a digital display) while using the area behind for co-working.

As the Grimsey Review 2.0 noted, we need to prioritise what people want to do on the high street. Creative mixed-use zoning will be needed to support the transition. "WeWorkVille" areas around co-working hubs are thriving by providing soft infrastructure like coffee bars, barbers, nail bars, restaurants, and clubs for those who work in the hubs.

There is limited need for new high buildings: thousands of stores exist in London which don't need to be stores anymore but could be freed to become co-working spaces.

The capital's planners have already supported restaurants to develop co-working during off-peak time. I frequent one, Hidden Coffee, near Camden Town Overground where my 'quiet' work can be done before lunch and then I can have lunch on site (much better

food than in an average co-working space). Cafe Floripa on Old Street is combining morning workspace with early evening samba fitness lessons and a Brazilian bar in the evenings.

The creative use of off-peak space in restaurants, along with the re-use of unwanted retail stock rooms for co-working, can bring people into the centre of the city. Those customers will then patronise food, drink and gym venues. We need to reclaim excess retail stores and re-occupy them: today, that increasingly looks to be as work hubs.

What next for London?

London is shifting from high streets as places to shop for "stuff" to city-centre social hubs for work and play (still shopping, in a way, but for fun experiences). High streets are needed for social, cultural and commercial reasons. Supporting their transition must be the Mayor's priority.

With this in mind, London would benefit from an emergency pro-retail transition policy, introducing flexible zoning, with more granular, sector-specific and location-specific business rates plus retail technology investments to bring stores up to millennials' screen-based expectations.

Investment in street sensors for more precise footfall gathering will support better retail decisions by giving retailers more confidence to take a bet on London locations.

Unlike Paris, London does not have a city-focused accelerator. What's needed is a well funded dedicated London Commerce 2.0 accelerator, backing innovative young retailers and helping to pilot new urban commerce ideas. There is no shortage of ideas coming from a range of think tanks and urban innovation centres – but we don't pursue them properly. The experience of Paris and Boston suggest that supporting new ideas pays off quickly.

Policymakers will need to look at planning for flexibility when it comes to how locations are used, letting the landlords experiment with what works. Bringing more co-working hubs into non-traditional office locations will drive footfall for local retailers.

London's high streets need to find their mojo again. With new data sources, exciting retail technology, and helpful planning policies, there is plenty to be optimistic about. We will not miss our shopping lists, which will become ancient relics in the age of online shopping. Social high streets with experience-based venues and co-working hubs will help us readjust to the new, post-shopocene era. We need London to be shoppable, but first and foremost, sociable, and sympathetic to the needs of those who work, play and live here. ■



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↑ Cafe culture, the new office?

Notes

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The sound of the underground: impact of the night tube

Hilly Janes

If Sadiq Khan ever pulled an all-nighter as a student at London Metropolitan University, he'd have had to get the night bus home across the river to Tooting, possibly with his dad in the driver's seat. But now that the suburb where he still lives is served by the Night Tube at weekends, the Mayor could party all night from Tooting to Totteridge.

Khan has made boosting London's night time economy a priority, appointing performer and presenter Amy Lamé as the first 'Night Czar', and a Night Time Commission to investigate how London can become one of the world's "most forward-thinking night-time cities." But without safe, affordable, round-the-clock transport, the plan would probably go nowhere.

In fact, it's rattling along. The first Night Tube trains ran on the Victoria and Central lines in August 2016, just after Khan's election. Now the service covers much of the Central Activities Zone, running on Fridays and Saturdays between midnight and 5am on the Victoria, Jubilee, and most of the Central, Northern and Piccadilly lines, with all stations manned.

In 2017 the London Overground night service made the hipster heart of Hackney beat faster when the service started between New Cross and Highbury & Islington, where it connects with the Victoria Line. By the end of 2018, 8.7 million customers a year used the Night Tube, up by one million on the previous year,

according to City Hall. Trains running every ten minutes have cut journey times by an average of 20 minutes. Off-peak Travelcards are valid till 4.30am and daily capping on Oyster and contactless cards also applies.

The rest of the tube network will have to wait until Transport for London (TfL) completes the necessary upgrades in 2023. DLR passengers will know whether their service will be included in 2021 when its contract comes up for renewal. There are no plans currently to run the service on Crossrail. Still, before long, the city's 24-hour-party people will benefit from faster, safer journeys home across the tube network — as will the workers who serve them. But there is a trade-off, and it's an old story exemplified by the Chelsea of Oscar Wilde and Dylan Thomas's Fitzrovia, by Notting Hillbillies and saucy Soho - all once bohemian, now bland and exclusive.

The creative sparks who light up an area after midnight can bring antisocial behavior, and then the authorities clamp down. The warehouses and railway arches that they can afford to inhabit are flipped into flats and high street retail outlets by developers for whom the combination of creative cool and accessibility is crack cocaine. There are more clubs in East London now than in Mayfair and Soho, and Tottenham is the new Hackney. Where will it all end?

There's no doubt that the Night Tube has boosted London's night time economy, generating an additional £190 million last year. It supports over 3,900 jobs, up 8.5 per cent from its first year.

At the Hippodrome Casino off Leicester Square, it's done nothing but good, says Ian Haworth, head of PR.

The casino hosts 40,000 customers a week, with a spike at weekends, when 300 staff work between 6pm and 8am.

"Services like the Night Tube are vital if you want to be an international destination rivalling other capital cities," Haworth says. The old model is changing, he argues: people are active at all times of the day and night.

Daniel Pedreschi, UK regional vice president of operations at the Park Plaza hotels group, agrees. The company operates several properties around the south bank and is opening an 'art'otel' in Hoxton.

"We hope our guests feel comfortable knowing that they won't be stranded when exploring the city, and our team members are able to fit their shifts around their daily lives," he says.

They are some of the 1.6 million Londoners who work at night. More than half of those in the cultural and leisure industries are paid less than the London Living Wage of £10.55 per hour. Demand for workers is now outstripping supply, and the Night Commission's final report this year recommended introducing a 'Night-Rider' ticket that would allow workers to move between different services in a single fare.

Danny Eilenberg, co-founder of creative and production agency Arnie Productions, has been organising events after hours for a decade, and recalls dark times as a student waiting for the night bus at 4am in a strange part of town. "It was pretty disconcerting, and the top decks were a magnet for criminal activity. There are more people around on the tube, cameras everywhere and if you tap in with an Oyster card you can be traced."

In the financial year 2018/19, 978 crimes were recorded, according to TfL. "Sometimes the tube home is more fun than clubbing," one school-leaver told me. "You dance with random people and it's very different from the morning when people don't talk to each other. I'll go to Lightbox in Vauxhall because it's near the tube and there are police at the station."

Safety is a prime concern too for Lyall Hakaraia, who has been producing cutting-edge events for 30 years and owns the queer "music, performance and mayhem" space VFD in Dalston. While Hakaraia acknowledges the Night Tube has been good for business, he is aware that many of VFD's LGBTQI community feel vulnerable travelling at night in a climate of increasing attacks.

"Dalston is now very expensive to live in. I want to know that everyone can get home quickly and safely," he says. "They feel safer on the tube than on buses or in mini-cabs or taxi app services."

The morning can't come too soon for some residents who share their neighborhood with creatures of the night. Brick Lane has always been open all hours, but the opening of Shoreditch station has flooded the area at weekends, says a Spitalfields resident for 30 years.

"There are more clubs and bars staying open, but fewer police on the streets, and the local station closed." She complains about the noise, drinking, drug-taking, violence, rubbish, and most recently, a couple in flagrante on her neighbour's balcony - a sex worker had rented the property for a night on Airbnb.

Councils respond to complaints from residents by slapping on late levies to pay for extra refuse and emergency services, withdrawing late licences, or even shutting venues down - as happened to Fabric, which has now reopened (albeit under very strict conditions) after a campaign by clubbers. But for the most part, the night circus moves on and outwards to areas like Tottenham.

Here, a new breed of social space has mushroomed in the ramshackle light-industrial area around Seven Sisters and Tottenham Hale tube stations. It's only 15 minutes from the centre of town, and Haringey Council will grant 5am weekend licences.

Five Miles is a microbrewery and cafe by day but club/dance space at night. Up the road, Grow Tottenham started as a community garden at Elephant & Castle - until they were evicted to make way for redevelopment of the Heygate estate - running club nights to raise money. Next door is The Cause, which helps fund mental health organisations through its club nights and events programme.

They are a sign of changing tastes - the latest wave of creatives is as interested in activism as all-night benders. A quarter of clean-living under-25s now classify themselves as non-drinkers and, along with property development, this has no doubt contributed to a decade of decline in pubs where bands could play their first gig - although 'grass roots' music venues are finally on the rise, up from 94 to 100 in the last year, supported by Sadiq Khan through a change in planning rules.

Back in Dalston, Lyall Hakaraia says there is a growing demand for performance events that finish earlier and reduce the need for all night travel. He is in also talks about working with Madame JoJo's, which was one of London's most diverse clubs until the authorities in Soho closed it in 2014, but which is due to reopen this year.

And at that venerable institution the National Theatre, this summer's Riverstage Festival final weekend party showcased Afrobeat collective Empire Sounds and Steppaz dance academy from, yes, Tottenham. The thriving nightlife that has flourished on the margins is being invited back in, it seems, to an exciting new mash up. Perhaps the future of a thriving London social centre at night will be like the Circle Line: what goes around comes around. ■

The case for a cultural vision for the Thames

Lucy Musgrave OBE

The River Thames is not reaching its full potential. How can we make the most of under-used areas, and educate Londoners about the heritage and importance of the river that runs through the heart of the city?

Over thousands of years the River Thames has influenced London's development, cultural life and character. The City of London's establishment on the northern banks – easier to access by boat – led to stark differences between the north and south of the river, with illicit activities like theatres and bear pits flourishing on the south bank, beyond the city walls. In the east, the width of the river facilitated the establishment of docks and large-scale industries, while the intimate scale and pastoral nature of the river's western reaches inspired artists of the English Landscape movement and conservationists.

The river still serves many important functions. It is a precious ecological asset – a natural super-highway that surges in and out of the city twice a day. It is the UK's busiest inland waterway for freight and transportation – in 2017, there were over ten million passenger journeys on the Thames. The Port of London Authority's (PLA) Vision for the Tidal Thames, a 20-year view of the river's future that aims to make the most of its potential, aims to double the number of people travelling by river to 20 million users by 2035. The Thames is the only river in the world to connect four UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It provides views to some of London's most iconic architecture, and its banks include structures and public spaces with unparalleled heritage value. Many of London's bridges, such as Tower Bridge and Millennium Bridge, are also destinations in their own right. Illuminated River - an ongoing, ambitious public art commission for a unified light installation across up to 15 bridges across the Thames – is revitalising the river at night. Once complete, it will be the longest public art project in the world.

Yet the River Thames is far from reaching its full potential. The GLA and the PLA commissioned Publica, in partnership with BOP Consulting, to undertake a study – including fieldwork, research and engagement – to explore the case for a future River Thames Cultural Vision and to provide an expansive definition of cultural for all. The long-term objective – included within the Mayor's draft London Plan – is to increase engagement with under-used areas, and to inspire Londoners about the heritage and importance of the River Thames to London.

The study identified ten key opportunities:

24 hours on the Thames

A Cultural Vision for the River Thames could support the Mayor's ambitions to create a thriving and diverse night-time culture across the city by sensitively integrating night-time cultural programming on the river, its banks and its cultural institutions.

Celebrate history and heritage on the Thames

Stories from the Thames' history could be brought to life through cultural projects such as processions to commemorate historic events, interactive information about historic events and places, and digital archives of archaeological finds. Programmes to celebrate the river's diversity could include tours of working wharves and campaigns to communicate the river's ecological significance.

Restore East London's relationship with the Thames

Cultural programming on the Thames is limited in the east compared to other areas. Physical connectivity to the river is restricted. No Thames Path currently exists east of Leamouth (on the north bank of the Thames), and the industries located in these reaches often sever nearby communities from the river.

The extent of the development around the eastern reaches of the Thames, such as The Thames Estuary Production Corridor, is extraordinary. The scale of change offers a unique opportunity for a bold, coordinated approach to cultural infrastructure and planning that could celebrate the unique ecology, industrial infrastructure and heritage of the eastern reaches of the Thames.

Embed culture within transport and promote journeys on the Thames

Riverside venues and visitor destinations could be encouraged to promote river journeys on their online platforms, and to integrate exhibitions, art commissions and cultural activity on river services and piers. Programmed river services could offer tours of art installations, such as Illuminated River, and specialist evening, architectural and wildlife tours. There is potential to use existing infrastructure to create integrated cultural programmes as a live celebration of – and on – the river.

Champion design of the highest quality on the Thames

Many public spaces close to the Thames don't have a meaningful relationship with the river. With careful design, they could be improved and connected. A coherent, bold and sensitive lighting strategy for the length of the Thames would celebrate the river's heritage assets and enrich the character of the riverbanks by night. Competitions and design programmes could focus on making the river's piers distinctive, environmentally sustainable, and place-specific.

Communicate and promote the cultural life of the Thames

The Thames hosts a wealth of cultural activities, including festivals, jazz cruises, archaeological walks and open-water swims. A huge array of venues and organisations along the river host exhibitions, theatre, dance, art and music events. An overarching communications strategy for the Thames – represented by a single digital platform – would help to raise public awareness of activity and events.

Promote and improve natural access points along the Thames

The Thames – and the 184-mile long National Trail Thames Path – offer Londoners unrivalled access to nature, yet many Londoners and visitors lack the knowledge, awareness and confidence to access the river safely. Coherent wayfinding and signage could identify safe, accessible points to access the foreshore. Enhancements to the public realm, along with cultural activities and events, could encourage the public to access and enjoy the Thames.

Foster collaboration and relationships connected by the Thames

Five of London's top-ten visitor attractions are on the banks of the Thames. Cultural institutions are extending their activity beyond their walls, changing the way they interact with their audiences. Many are turning to partnership and collaboration to maximise resources and to find new sources of funding, develop ideas, and expand their audiences. A River Thames Cultural Vision could connect organisations across sectors to make the most of these opportunities, establishing partnerships between cultural institutions and creative communities and delivering spectacular productions and events that engage all Londoners.

Empower cultural champions for the Thames

Governance along the Thames is complex. Cross-borough collaboration is inconsistent and investment in culture is often disjointed. With the PLAs Vision for the Tidal Thames – and aspirations to promote increased use and enjoyment of the river – there is an opportunity to embed culture within all functions on and along the Thames, and to engender a positive attitude towards ambitious cultural projects.

Enable the long-term viability of culture on the Thames

Over 40 per cent of the river's banks lie within GLA-designated Opportunity Areas. Several major developments are planned, including new cultural districts such as Woolwich Cultural Quarter and Greenwich Design District. Unlocking funding mechanisms for culture and enabling meaningful, coordinated investment will be critical to the delivery and long-term success of a cultural vision for the Thames.

In short...

A River Thames Cultural Vision could drive significant economic, environmental and social change, supporting London's cultural tourism; enriching its evening and night-time life; improving public transport; and connecting its diverse communities with each other and the river. There is an opportunity to elevate London's international profile, deliver on the Mayor's Good Growth priorities, and put the Thames back at the heart of London's cultural life. ■



↑ A group of children explores the foreshore by the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich. According to historic accounts, the foreshore steps shown here were used to bring Lord Admiral Nelson's coffin to the Thames, where it was placed in Charles II's state barge and rowed up the river to Westminster for the funeral.

A new generation of innovation districts

Richard Brown

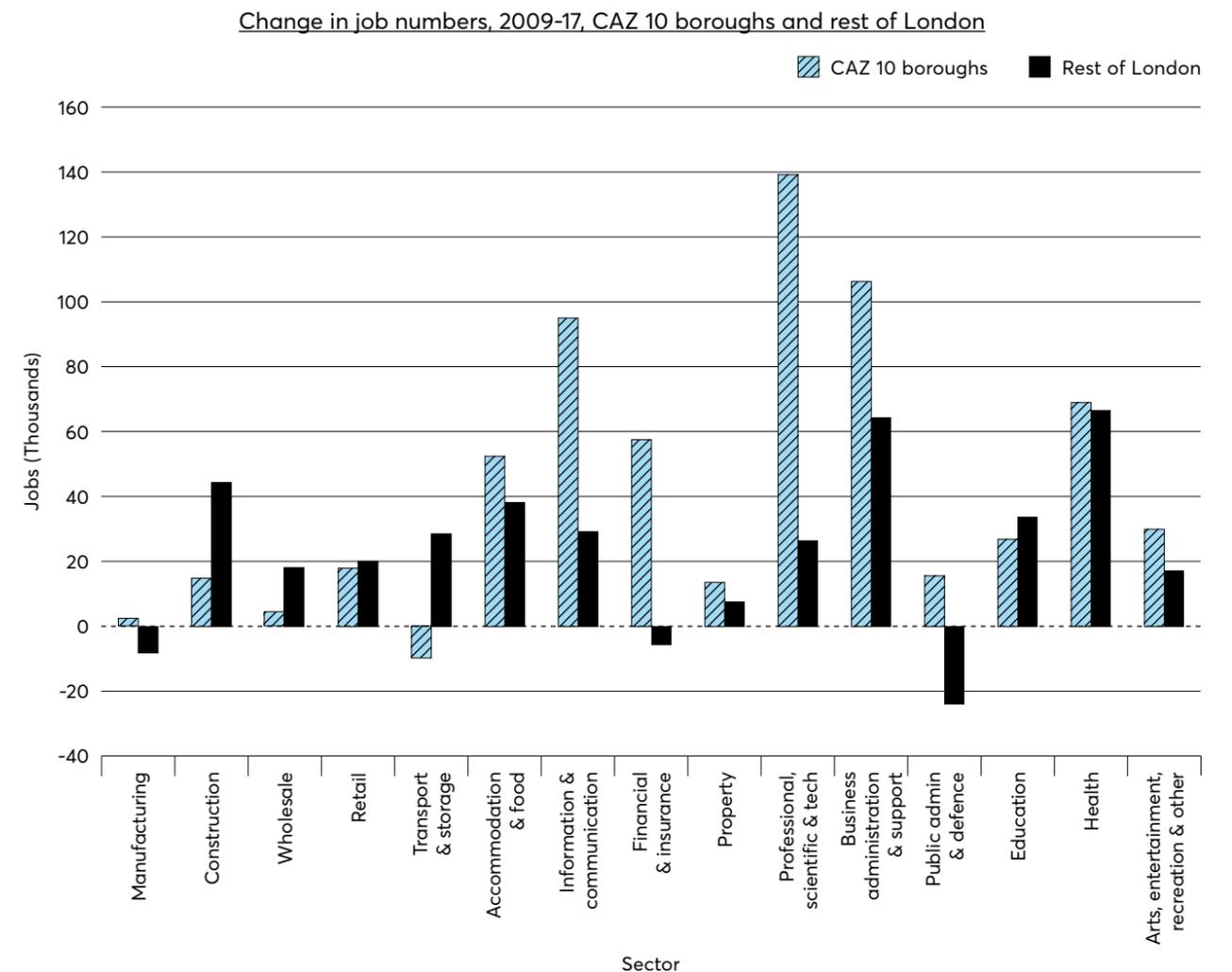
Clustering is what makes cities happen. Some of central London's business clusters are well-known, others are not. But this rich mix of sectors has diversified since the financial crash. What keeps them thriving?

Outside Centre for London's offices in Hatton Garden, between the plane trees, bike racks, and trophy sports cars, is one of London's most resilient clusters. The street is lined with more than 50 jewellers' shops, the rings in their windows labelled with tiny price tags: you need good eyesight or a full wallet to shop here. Behind these retail operations, and the more informal trading that takes place on the pavement, are their suppliers – London's diamond bourse, bullion dealers, and the suppliers of polishing machines and 'findings' (the mounts and clips that fix gems to jewellery).

We know that clustering is what makes cities happen. People come together to compete and cooperate, to share access to raw materials, customers and expertise, to participate in the dance of innovation, adaptation, and adoption that enables growth. Some of central London's clusters are well known – the Central Activities Zone, Canary Wharf and surroundings accommodate more than 80 per cent of London's finance and insurance jobs, and more than 60 per cent of those in professional, scientific and technical services.¹

This concentration conceals a more textured picture. Even in the City of London, the heart of the global financial system, only around a third of jobs are actually in financial services.² Central London is a centre for culture, for education, for government, for gastronomy, for tourism and tech, as well as for commerce. This sector diversity may be why it is referred to cryptically as a 'central activities zone', not by the generic 'central business district'.

That rich mix of functions seems to be getting richer, as sectors overlap, cross-pollinate and merge. Across the ten central London boroughs, employment in professional scientific and technical services, business administration and support, and information and communications all grew faster than financial services in 2009-17; and accommodation and food jobs grew almost as fast. London has diversified its way out of the economic crisis that took hold a decade ago. But you need to dig below the sector titles to see where new jobs are being created.



Source: Employment (workplace) by industry 2009-17, ONS

Much of London's growth is at the intersection of what sounds like increasingly dated and restrictive sector designations such as design, advertising, social research, software publishing, computer programming, broadcasting (see table).³ This growth is concentrated in central London.

Top 20 London-wide classes in professional, scientific and technical services, and information and communications, by growth in number of jobs, 2008-16

- Business and other management consultancy activities
- Computer consultancy activities
- Activities of head offices
- Computer programming activities
- Advertising agencies
- Accounting, bookkeeping and auditing activities; tax consultancy
- Engineering activities and related technical consultancy
- Architectural activities
- Specialised design activities
- Technical testing and analysis
- Television programming and broadcasting activities
- Web portals
- Media representation
- Radio broadcasting
- Wireless telecommunications activities
- Other research and experimental development on natural sciences and engineering
- Satellite telecommunications activities
- Motion picture, video and television programme post-production activities
- Sound recording and music publishing activities
- Research and experimental development on social sciences and humanities

An example of the process of incubation and recombination can be seen around Old Street roundabout. 'Tech City' emerged – years before politicians heralded it – from a combination of cheap workspace, design studios and high-quality digital infrastructure clustered on the northern City fringe. Now Tech City has itself diversified and spread – moving deeper into Hackney, but also recolonising the Square Mile, where it has helped give birth to new hybrids such as Fintech, and westwards, where more consumer focused tech companies now account for 25 per cent of space leased around Oxford Street.⁴

Some clusters, such as journalism, have been displaced and dispersed from their original epicentres, although 'Fleet Street' is still the designation for a sector as much as it is a road. Legal services, on the other hand, remain anchored to the quadrangles and gardens of the Inns of Court, near law courts and clients.

Other traditional clusters are now fostering new growth: biotech, intellectual property, and R&D can be seen clustering round the swoosh of academic institutions that bisect the city from Kings Cross through Bloomsbury, Kingsway and Aldwych to Elephant and Castle in the south. Those universities alone employ more than 30,000 people, with a further 10,000 in South Kensington, and they are becoming the anchors for a new generation of innovation districts; cauldrons and catalysts for knowledge economy start-ups.

Growth continues in head office activities (the subject of a recent Centre for London report⁵), and in consultancy, accountancy and a whole range of business support services. Firms want to locate their corporate core in the places that nurture innovation and attract talent. For the moment, at least, central London is one of those places. The social city substructure of clubs, theatres, restaurants, shops and bars gives London its edge, and anchors people and businesses alike.

This heady hybridisation and cross-pollination can be seen on every street in central London. It creates strength and resilience as businesses seek to cluster not just with their competitors – as in Hatton Garden, Denmark Street or Tottenham Court Road – but also with complementary enterprises. Design studios locate near IP lawyers, digital marketing agencies by bicycle cafes, broadcasters near post-production suites.

But there is also fragility. Many of these firms are only lightly tethered to place; they trade globally, and their workforce may mix people from different countries and continent. Their much-vaunted 'agility' is also the ability to shift location when circumstances demand. Their tightly networked character may deepen the impact of shocks, destabilising complex networks of enterprises rather than just single companies.

To date, central London has had extraordinary success as a hub that flourishes through hosting disruptive

upstarts alongside venerable institutions. Retaining and consolidating this success – and keeping London's edge – in the face of high living costs and Brexit turbulence - is a challenge for the central London boroughs, and for metropolitan and national government. ■

Notes

1. Douglass G, Work and life in the Central Activities Zone, northern part of the Isle of Dogs and their fringes, GLA 2015.
2. Employment (workplace) by industry 2009-17, ONS
3. Greater London Authority, More detailed jobs series, July 2018 update
4. Arup, West End Good Growth, 2018
5. Bosetti N and Brown J, Head Office – London's rise and future as a corporate sector, Centre for London 2019.

Localism and the rise of Business Improvement Districts

Ruth Duston OBE, OC

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are a proven model to help enable, curate and focus private sector ‘interest’. Increasingly, they are taking a longer, more all-encompassing view, helping to kickstart major projects, engaging public-sector and private-sector partners, and developing valuable partnerships to help make things happen.



© Miguel Sousa

↑ St. James's Park in the Victoria BID

Not all that long ago, civic governance was largely a case of ‘never the twain shall meet’ with regards to the public and private sectors. While the private sector has long taken an ‘interest’ in the public realm (UK tax payers are still paying for some of the ill-fated PFI programmes championed in the 90s and early 2000s) the nitty-gritty governance of our towns and cities has been predominantly left to councils. The concept of true partnership between the public and private sectors may have been talked about — there’s certainly been a lot of rhetoric — but it’s hard to point to many success stories in the past.

This began to shift at the start of the 2000s, when, with growing public debt, shrinking council budgets, and the subsequent decline of our town and city centres, UK BIDs were first mooted. Successful BIDs have existed since the 70s in the US, so it was probably always going to be a case of when, not if - and with the government at the time struggling to find long-term solutions for the public sector, it is not surprising that the Whitehall mandarins’ gaze fell on the private sector. A new era of public/private partnership was born.

The concept seemed to fit New Labour’s devolution agenda of handing more power to local areas. Post-2010, the theme of working more collaboratively with the private sector was boosted both by the age of austerity and David Cameron’s localism agenda.

Something else has changed, though, in recent years, which means that it is too crude to see the rise of BIDs simply as an answer to cuts in public spending.

High-quality public space has grown in importance. Workplaces are now not just confined to the office. Employees expect more. Mental and physical wellbeing are rising up the agenda, and there is a greater recognition of the role that outdoor space, greenery, places to think and areas to find a moment of calm in the day all play in the ecosystem of a ‘good place’.

Not only do customers and visitors now want more from the ‘bits in between’ the buildings, but workers do too. This is arguably why the private sector — from office-based corporates and start-ups, to retailers, food and beverage and leisure operators — are more engaged in the public sphere than ever before. Being located in a ‘good area’ is not just a nice-to-have; it is becoming increasingly essential to attract and retain the best talent,

entice customers and visitors and of course, to tempt investors too.

BIDs are now a proven model to help enable, curate and focus this crucial private sector ‘interest’.

Today, with more than 300 across the country and 60 in London alone, BIDs play an increasingly influential and strategic role in the governance of the capital, working as vital partners for delivery, and as critical friends and catalysts for change and enhancement. Of course businesses are primarily commercially driven but, increasingly, they are taking a longer, more all-encompassing view to investment. Places need people: they thrive on a strong sense of community (not only workers and visitors, but residents too), and businesses better understand how important good places are to their bottom line.

I am a big believer in the model and would argue that BIDs have the potential to play an even greater role in good civic governance and growth in London. I would go as far to say that they ought to have a more formal role in local decision-making: they are already accountable, transparent, and represent the views of an increasingly ‘civic-minded’ business community.

I draw this conclusion with the benefit of career experience in central and local government and, latterly, in the private sector. For the last 15 years I have worked with several BIDs and business partnerships across London. Every day I see for myself the transformative impact BIDs are having across swathes of the capital.

I have leveraged in over £30 million of private sector investment to drive economic growth, which has catalysed over £6 billion of national and international investment for the redevelopment of large parts of central London, such as the pedestrianisation of the Strand/Aldwych. BIDs are a proven model for driving ambitious agendas of change and enhancement, which is probably why we have seen so many successfully developed over the last decade or so.

More than 60,000 businesses are now based in BID areas in the capital, representing well over million London employees.

Community and collaboration sit at the heart of the BID movement. Businesses, some of whom compete commercially against each other, come together in BIDs, coalescing around shared goals and priorities to enhance the economic environment so that everybody in the area benefits. This is not just about street cleaning and greening projects (although these do matter), and it’s certainly not about BIDs just plugging gaps in council budgets. BIDs are helping to kickstart major projects, engaging public sector and private sector partners, and developing valuable partnerships with public sector colleagues to help make things happen.

In South Westminster, for example, the Victoria BID has long understood the importance of the Victoria

mainline railway station to the vibrancy and growth of the area. Research commissioned by the BID demonstrated that lack of investment in the station would hinder the long-term growth of the area. The Victoria BID is playing a vital role in bringing the right people to the table, with a series of working groups involving Network Rail, TfL, GLA, Westminster Council and local property owners. Acting as the voice of businesses in the area, the BID has been at the heart of the work to develop a new innovative funding model.

In South Westminster, the transformation of Strand/Aldwych is another interesting case study. The Northbank BID has been lobbying for this vital scheme since 2014 (in its first Public Realm vision). The BID was able to invest in some initial modelling and vision work, as well as lobbying to get the project off the ground. That showed what was both ambitious and possible. The idea was picked up by London First as a priority project and is now being led by Westminster Council. It is fully funded, and the project is happening.

London’s position as a truly global city is more important than ever. Ensuring that we project the right message to an international visitor and potential investor is crucial.

With continued strain on public finances, not least against the uncertain backdrop of Brexit, BIDs give a voice to business communities, championing local priorities and ensuring the right people are at the table. Businesses understand that together they can be stronger and lobby effectively on big, strategic issues that have an impact on their commercial performance and ability to grow.

The progress being made on both the station project and Strand Aldwych is testament to the close partnership working between the BIDs and Westminster Council. Both demonstrate that there are many shared aspirations between the public and private sectors and many ways to innovate and collaborate to help make good things happen. They prove that through partnership both within the private sector and with public sector partners, the best outcomes for all can be achieved. ■

Retail therapy: helping the high street to survive

Jackie Sadek

In the last Autumn Statement, a whopping £675 million was announced by the Chancellor for a “Future High Streets Fund”, for which any frontline local authority can bid. And in Boris Johnson’s very first weekend as Prime Minister, a further boost for the high streets fund was pledged in a speech outlining his £3.6 billion “levelling up” programme. What has caused this unparalleled release of fiscal stimulus?

In part it is a response to the seismic shifts in the retail sector (and thus in the retail property sector) that we’ve witnessed over the last two years, with the rash of store closures and Company Voluntary Actions (CVAs). All the high street retail companies that remain have sought (nay, demanded) rent reductions. It’s been nothing short of scorched earth out there. And it isn’t over yet.

But the stimulus is also in response to a more profound explicit recognition that our high streets and our town centres matter, particularly in a post-Brexit economy. The centres of towns and cities are the single most visible demonstration of the social and economic health and vitality of the places in which we live, work and socialise. Nothing communicates market failure and eroding confidence more than a failing high street. But (and it is a very big but) if town centres are nurtured and cared for, they still have the chance of a vibrant future. Conversely, if they are left to their own devices, our town centres will starve to a slow and agonizing death.

And — for anyone who still hasn’t got this message — the future for our town centres is not, is most definitely NOT, predicated on retail.

So where do we look for the answers? Well, in 2013, and then again in 2018, I was privileged to be part of a cross-disciplinary team that the veteran retailer, Bill Grimsey (ex-CEO of Iceland and Wickes, and author of the excellent “*Sold Out*”, a must-read for anyone who wants to understand the history of modern retailing) convened to undertake a thoroughgoing review of the UK high street. The first Review (“An alternative future for the high street”) made quite an impact. The second Review (“It’s time to reshape our town centres”, five years later,) landed in the midst of the latest bout of retail collapses, CVAs, pension scandals, and general mayhem, and was game-changing (both Grimsey Reviews are free to download from the web address given at the bottom of the page). The UK government then set up a Commission of its own, under the venerable leadership of Sir John Timpson, and this then led inexorably to the announcement of its £675 million “Future High Streets” Fund.

Our main thesis, in both reviews, is that we need to turn things on their head. Our town centres are precious places: places of economic development, community service and social discourse. And their future should NOT be predicated solely on retail activity. This latter point was rammed home by the fact that we were led by Bill Grimsey, who speaks as a retailer, man and boy. He rather charmingly holds up his hand, in front of hundreds of people, on a regular basis, and says “it is all my fault” before going on to lay out a passionate treatise as to how to fix the problem. Bill has worked long and hard (and wholly unpaid) at cracking this rather fraught issue, since it is so fundamental to the underpinning of local economies, and therefore to the success or failure of the UK economy as a whole.

So, what are the main findings of the Grimsey Reviews? Well, there are a number of recommendations

(31 in the first study and 25 in the second), but really the prescription boils down to two main issues.

The first is that you need a plan. Every town must develop a plan that is businesslike and focused on transforming the centre into a complete community hub, incorporating health, housing, arts, education, entertainment, leisure, business/office space, as well as some shops (if you've got 'em, hang on to 'em) while developing a unique selling proposition (USP). Without a plan and a thoroughgoing understanding of your strengths and weaknesses, you won't get far.

The second thing is that you need a leader who is talented and committed: either an elected Mayor with a mandate and authority, or a business leader, or a local government leader bringing together all stakeholders in the community to develop and implement a plan. Strong leadership and vision are essential — and there can be no equivocation: everyone must accept and work with the leadership.

If the centre can coalesce around a leader and put in place a plan, what then? Think about the most successful high streets and centres in London, and you are likely to think of places like Marylebone High Street, Covent Garden and Borough Market. What do all these places have in common? It is that they are in one land ownership and therefore the offer in each can be curated to achieve an overall experience.

Obviously, it's nothing like as easy when all the property does not fall into one land ownership; but if you get into that sort of mindset when putting together a plan, you will be starting from the right place — and most landlords will bite your hand off if you are offering

solutions. The curating of a place, based on its distinct heritage, is multidimensional and complex but should feature strongly when developing the “offer”. Why would anyone want to live, work, play, visit and invest in this place? What does it stand for? What could be done with events, or pop-ups, or specialist markets, to animate our spaces? What do people need locally? Where are the small affordable spaces that people can start businesses in? Where are the safe spaces for mums with young children to get together, or carers of the frail elderly?

Finally, and I know this is already happening in a London context through the GLA, we need to do far more sharing. Best practice is frequently not shared, as far too many agencies remain in silos, and people end up endlessly reinventing the wheel. It is wasteful and unnecessary. There is plenty of data out there, not just Grimsey, but a raft of information from British BIDs the Local Government Association, and Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which will support you in your quest for a vital and humming town centre. The Scottish Government has done some wonderful work on this (look for Dr Malcolm Frazer) and (trump card this) get your search engine to find Roeselare in Western Flanders, the one town in Europe which implemented the Grimsey Review in its entirety in 2014, and which has seen a simply astonishing uplift in its fortunes as a result.

This is difficult and painstaking work. But help is out there. And the government is right to be ploughing in yet more resources to try to fix this problem. The health of our town centres is a crucial issue, at a crucial time. ■

vanishinghighstreet.com

Taking over the streets

Joanna Averley

Oslo's transport system is leading the way, especially when it comes to electric vehicles. Drivers can make use of free tolls, access to bus lanes and free parking in the city centre. What can central London learn from its European neighbour?

© Tim Bounds



© Kake



↑ Borough Market's bustle stands in stark contrast to the borough of Croydon, which had 1,269 empty retail units in December 2018

In Oslo recently, a friend picked me up in her sleek, white, brand new Tesla, with only a steering wheel and iPad to disrupt the clear lines of the dashboard. Once I'd figured out how to open the door, we sped into Oslo, enjoying the instant acceleration of an electric vehicle (EV), taking advantage of the free tolls, access to bus lanes and free parking in the city centre.

The success of Oslo city council's policy for CO2 emissions reduction and EV promotion could be seen all around: 30 per cent of all new cars sold in the city in 2015 and 2016 were EVs or plug-in hybrids (nearly 40 per cent nationally in 2017). There are over 62,750 EV's registered in the greater Oslo area, and there are 1,300 charge points, with a goal of adding another 600 per year over the next three years.

What is London doing? Can we match up to Oslo's success in promoting EVs, and even surpass it? Is that enough? What else needs to happen to promote sustainable transportation that enhances the city rather than detracting from it?

We are definitely moving in the right direction. In June this year, the Mayor announced his London electric vehicle infrastructure delivery plan, noting that in the last year London has seen "more than 1,000 new charge points installed at petrol stations, town centres and retrofitted into street lighting columns. Our world-famous cabbies now drive more than 1,700 electric taxis and Transport for London runs Europe's largest electric bus fleet." This is set against the backdrop of data from 2018 with EVs accounting for 2.81 per cent of vehicle sales in London – higher than the UK average of 2.13 per cent.

But London and its CAZ have got a much larger, more complex set of issues to address than Oslo, and EVs are only part of the solution.

London is a global city, aiming to increase the working and resident population in the centre from an already significant cluster of 1.7 million workers and 0.23 million residents. The city's different policy aspirations are interconnected, not least by competing demands on space. That means that when we think about sustainable transport and movement patterns, a complete systems approach is required.

Working on a transport projects of the scale of HS2, which will arrive in a number of UK city centres, has shown me not only the sophistication but also the limitations of our ability to adapt how we use our public sphere to promote sustainable movement patterns. As an industry, we too often seem overly reliant on models and predictions that are (in general) based on historic or, (at the very least), current trends. We need to predict an alternative future that provides for a more people-centred, sustainable public realm. This alternative future will prioritise people and bikes over buses, buses over taxis, and taxis over cars. There are of course many

unknowns: it is hard to make predictions when we don't even know if there will be a human behind the wheel of any of the vehicles.

What we do know is that if people can't move around comfortably and safely, the city falters. Take, for example, the footpath around Bank Station – multiple thin stairways lead up from the tube to similarly narrow pavements on a junction that is a meeting of six busy highways in the heart of the city. Space for people is very limited; hence the City of London has restricted the use of the junction during work hours to cyclists and buses to improve safety.

Increasingly, road space is being redesigned and given over to public space, pedestrians and cyclists. Long gone are the days when planners would worry about protests from retailers and business over the impact on passing trade if a street was pedestrianised. The opposite is now the case, and Old Street, Swiss Cottage, Highbury Corner and Kingston are next on the list for improvement in favour of pedestrians and cyclists, in line with the recently published *London Walking Plan*.

All this reflects the Mayor's Transport Strategy policy, which has as a central aim "for 80 per cent of all trips in London to be made on foot, by cycle, or using public transport by 2041."

This ambition is underpinned by the plan for Healthy Streets, according to which ten evidence-based indicators enable us to determine what makes streets attractive places.

Disruption – both planned and unplanned – can help us think differently about the role of the public realm and our streets. There are occasions as a Londoner when the unexpected gives you a different perspective on our city, for example, the memory of the view from Richmond Park across London when the unpronounceable Eyjafjallajökull volcanic erupted in Iceland, grounding all flights. I've never seen a more blue or quiet sky over London: many people will remember the surprise and pleasure of seeing no vapour trails or hearing any jet engine noise.

London's streets are now more than ever the place for sometimes unexpected protest, celebration and demonstration. These can show us a different future and a different way to use our city. The number of people taking to London's streets are impressive: Pride 2019 attracted an estimated one million marchers; the "Put it to the people" Brexit march an estimated three-quarters of a million. The Lumiere Festival closed Regent Street and its junctions, providing a few evenings of light and delight on pedestrianised thoroughfares. And Extinction Rebellion have taken the occupation of city streets to a new level, for an urgent purpose, if not without concerns about their short-term impact on the local economy.

Over time, the nature and usage of public space and streets in central London has changed, sometimes

as a result of underlying, incremental increases in the flow and density of people. Soho and the South Bank are prime examples. The increased usage and pressure on space is likely to continue to increase in the CAZ. With 80 per cent of Londoners' travel time spent on the street, as well as our desire to use our streets increasing all the time, we need to continue to prioritise people and ensure that we understand this movement ecology and systems of our city. It's no time to take our foot off the gas. Well, it is. But you know what I mean. ■



↑ One of London's 200 electric buses, London has the largest electric bus fleet in Europe.

Further research on central London

Centre for London's research team are currently examining the changing nature of the capital's centre. Published in early 2020, the detailed report will help set the debate for the Mayoral elections and inform Mayoral, borough and national policy development. It will set out how the organisation and policies governing the area need to change if it is to retain its global status.

Research synopsis

Central London plays many roles. It is the city's engine and its shop window; a local neighbourhood but also a place where tourists flock, services are traded across

the world, and national political decisions are made. But central London is complicated, changing, and its challenges are growing. How can we ensure that this vital district is fit for the future?

Central London is vital to the economic success of both capital and country. But its administration is split between ten local authorities, the Greater London Authority and central government, and the way it is taxed and funded looks increasingly outdated and incoherent.

If you are interested in contributing to this project, please contact Jack Brown:

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